

**The Influence of the Internal Stakeholder View on Recruitment Practice – A Swiss
and German Case Study**

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ABSTRACT

The human resource management department of organisations is facing more and more challenges. Those challenges are partly caused by the beginning demographic change and the so-called 'war for talent' that puts strong pressure on the recruitment tasks of human resource managers. New approaches and perspectives are needed to face this situation. This study looks at the stakeholder theory and brings it together with the recruitment function of human resource departments. The stakeholder theory has already been studied and applied in several fields of business, but not very intensively in human resource management. The literature demonstrates that the work has just begun on developing human resource systems that take advantage of relationships of organisations with their external stakeholders and information that is obtained through those relationships. However, within the field of human resource management, stakeholder management has never been studied regarding organisations' recruitment function. The aim of this study was to explain how and why the adoption of a stakeholder perspective may influence the recruitment of an organisation. For that, the perceived influence of the internal stakeholder perspective in regards to recruitment and employer branding as well as risks, benefits and further potentials were investigated.

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. This allowed the author to collect rich information to find answers to the research questions. Two organisations were selected for a multi-case study. In the first phase, a document analysis in both cases was conducted. This formed the basis for the second phase where internal semi-structured in-depth interviews with a broad selection of employees were run. The analysis of both cases has demonstrated the legitimacy for the choice of methodology for this study. This methodology allowed for a deep insight into the recruitment activities of the organisations and the involvement of their employees and stakeholders. From the collected data, stakeholder maps for recruitment were drawn. A strong perceived influence of the internal stakeholder perspective on the success of recruitment activities and the employer branding of the organisations was found.

This study contributes strongly to the literature as it addresses the named gap. Furthermore, it suggests forms of visualisation of complex stakeholder networks in recruitment. It also raises related benefits, risks and opportunities connected to the

stakeholder perspective for recruitment and therefore sets the basis for further discussions.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Franz Hussinger.

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DECLARATION STATEMENT

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GLOSSARY

The idea of this glossary is not to provide full definitions of specific terms, but to make it clear to the reader how those terms are understood in the study.

- **Stakeholder Approach**
The stakeholder theory built the understanding of what it means as an organisation to be embedded in a network of stakeholders. This way of thinking is here referred to as the stakeholder approach. It is closely connected to the Stakeholder Concept.
- **Stakeholder Concept**
Refers to the approach to face the conceptual problem of dealing with the external environment of the firm by redrawing the picture of the firm to be part of a stakeholder network (Freeman, 2010).
- **Stakeholder Engagement**
Is the process by which an organisation actively interacts with its stakeholders for the benefit of all actors involved.
- **Stakeholder Management**
Stakeholder management "refers to management practices that reflect awareness of and response to the legitimate concerns of the multiple constituencies of the corporation" (Post, Preston, Sachs, 2002, p. 20).
- **Stakeholder Paradigm**
Paradigms are basic assumptions on which a theory is built on. Here it is referred to the embeddedness of an organisation in the stakeholder network. The organisation and the stakeholders are all seen as actors for value creation in the network. (Sachs & Rühli, 2011).
- **Stakeholder Perspective**
The terms is used here as a substitute term for Stakeholder View (see below).
- **Stakeholder View**
"The stakeholder view of the corporation holds that the capacity of a business enterprise to generate sustainable wealth, and hence long-term value, is determined by its relationships with critical stakeholders." (Post, Preston, Sachs, 2002, p. 51). In this thesis, the term refers to this way of thinking which means to see the own organisation as a part of and within a network of the critical stakeholders.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAQDAS	Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CV	Curriculum Vitae
Et al.	et alii/aliae/alia (and others)
E g.	for example
e-HRM	Electronic HRM
FH	University of Applied Sciences
GDK	Cantonal Health Directors
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
ISV	Industry Structure View
IT	Information Technology
KAP	Health Promotion for Elderly
MNE	Multi-national Enterprise
N/A	Not available
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
P.	Page
RBV	Resource-based View
SH	Stakeholder
SHV	Stakeholder view
SHVMS	Stakeholder Value Management System
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise
SPV	Socio-political View
TU	Technical University
US	United States

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The author was involved in several research projects throughout the years prior to undertaking this study. His main field was stakeholder management with a central focus on the processes and the evaluation of stakeholder engagements which involved the development of models and tools for stakeholder engagements. As the author has previously been involved in human resource management several times in his career, he found it surprising to learn that in those research projects every interviewee discussed human resources issues even though they had not been asked to do so. Somehow human resource issues seemed to play an important role for people when engaging with stakeholders. This inspired the author to look at the stakeholder theory through the eyes of the human resources departments and to focus here on the area of recruitment.

It has to be kept in mind that despite the current impacts on the European labour market with high unemployment rates also among high-qualified people, there is a change in society, which cannot be ignored when looking at the future of recruitment. This major change is the upcoming ‘war for talent’, which has been significantly caused by the demographic change. As this study concentrated on two cases from Germany and Switzerland, the demographic change has not yet fully begun in those two countries, but the labour market situation in both of the two organisations’ industries – IT consulting and health – is already challenging. The upcoming challenge caused by the demographic change should not be underestimated. Besides the inevitable beginning of a war for talent, connected issues like health of employees, performance and motivation among older employees will be part of the upcoming demographic change. This means major work for the HR departments, ranging from fields like employer branding, labour utilisation, succession planning, to workplace health promotion, HR development and brain drain. There is also the challenge of facing stronger employee turnover and, of course, recruiting – which will be the central challenge (Zölch, Mücke, Graf & Schilling, 2009). The study here focused on this important area.

The stakeholder theory and its applications have already proven its general usefulness in organisational practice. Empirical studies clearly demonstrate the benefits/advantages of

a proactive stakeholder management for organisations (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & De Colle., 2010). Today, innovative organisations move towards a proactive rather than reactive approach in stakeholder management (Sachs & Rühli, 2011).

Human resources management (HRM) has already been investigated in connection with stakeholder management. Previous studies have covered multiple fields and have found useful application for stakeholder management in human resource practice. Some of those fields are human resources development from a stakeholder perspective (Garavan, 1995), change management in human resource management using a stakeholder approach (Lamberg Pajunen, Parvinen, & Savage, 2008), the handling of crisis (Ulmer, 2001) and the management of downsizing (Guild, 2002; Tsai, Yeh, Wu & Huang, 2005). However, seeing the recruitment of an organisation from the stakeholder perspective has widely been ignored thus far.

The literature demonstrates that stakeholder theory could be used to explain why some HRM strategies work better than others (Dipboye, 2007). Furthermore, work has only begun on developing human resource systems that take more advantage of relationships of organisations with their external stakeholders (Ulmer, 2001; Guild, 2002). Those studies have shown positive signs of impact that stakeholder engagements might have on several disciplines of HRM (Greenwood and Simmons, 2004; Dipboye, 2007; Ferrary, 2009). Such signs of positive impact may therefore also be assumed for the recruitment efforts of organisations.

This study intends to increase the understanding of the impact which stakeholder management may have on recruitment practice of organisations and address this gap in the literature. Therefore, learning more about the connection of the stakeholder perspective and recruitment has the potential to add value to that scientific discussion.

1.2 The research question, aim and objectives

The background information provided in the previous chapter raises the following research question:

How does the internal stakeholder perspective influence the employee recruitment activities of organisations?

Therefore the aim of the research is to find an:

Explanation as to how and why the adoption of a stakeholder management perspective may influence an organisation's employee recruitment activities.

The objectives are as follows:

1. To collect the needed information and create a visualisation of the stakeholder networks for the recruitment of the two organisations.
2. To find out if there is a perceived influence of the internal stakeholder perspective in regards to recruitment and employer branding.
3. To find out what risks and benefits are connected and what potentials are seen for recruitment when organisations adopt a stakeholder perspective.

1.3 Research methodology

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study because it allowed the author to collect rich information to find answers to the research questions. This was realised with a multi-case study with two different organisations. Data was collected in two phases. During the first phase qualitative and quantitative data was provided by the two organisations in the form of internal documents. This data was enriched with additional publically available documents.

In the second phase, rich qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with both organisations in Switzerland and Germany. Those interviews were pre-tested in a pilot study on interviewees from both countries as well.

In the main study, all interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed using the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti. All interviewees were then invited to validate the findings from the document analysis and the interviews using an online survey tool.

1.4 Contribution of the study

The named objective and the aims of the study show the direction of the contribution. Starting from the theoretical background, it needs to be mentioned that the literature of this study has shown that the considered framework studies have indeed shown positive signs of impact that stakeholder management has on certain disciplines of HRM, which may also include recruitment. It demonstrated that enhancing knowledge about the connection of the stakeholder perspective and recruiting has the potential to contribute valuable insights into the scientific discourse and therefore provides a contribution in closing this gap in the literature.

One of the major contributions of this study is that it is certainly the first empirical study in this field. This prepares the ground for further research, which could be tied in with this study.

From the collected and analysed data it was possible to draw several stakeholder maps for the recruitment of the two individual organisations. Until the time of writing, such specific visualisations of stakeholder maps have not been published in the regarding literature.

The study has demonstrated that in both cases there is a perceived influence on the recruitment of the organisations when the stakeholder perspective is adopted. It can be concluded that organisations that are not yet following a stakeholder approach, as well as organisations that partly do, see an influence of the internal stakeholder view on their recruitment activities and its success.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated that the analysed organisations and their employees see concrete benefits connected to the adoption of the stakeholder perspective for recruitment. Besides those benefits, the organisations and their employees also see risks and opportunities. Generally, it was found that adopting the stakeholder perspective leads to new insights and may also inspire new ideas that can be of various natures to improve the organisations' success in recruitment and their employer branding efforts.

Finally, the chosen methodology has proven to be useful for this study. It was carefully tested and run, and therefore it ensured a high quality of the gained results. The transparent and rigorous proceeding gives potential for this methodology to be used in similar studies in the same field.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. It shows the rationale of the project and outlines its research question, aim and objectives. Furthermore, it provides insight into the chosen methodology and discusses the contribution of the findings, which is followed by this outline of the study.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presents the literature review which is the basis of this study. Literature from the field of stakeholder theory as well as from the field of human resource management and recruitment are presented and discussed.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, the research question, its sub-questions, as well as the aim and objectives are presented in more detail. Followed by this, the research paradigm and the theoretical framework are explained and discussed. Chapter 3 also provides in-depth information on the selected research design and methods. Finally, the sampling design for the study is explained.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the pilot study, which was run as a preparation for the main study. It explains the procedure and gives information on the selected interviewees and the learnings, which were gained through the pilot study for the main study.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 gives a full insight into the data collection process with the two organisations. It also shows the procedure of the data analysis and gives information on the validity and reliability of the study. Furthermore, the issue of research ethics is addressed in much detail and the limitations of the chosen methodology are presented.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 discusses the research findings gained from the data collection and data analysis of the two organisations. It addresses the findings from the document analysis and the interview phase. Chapter 6 also presents the answers to the research questions and addresses the conceptual framework from the literature synthesis. The chapter also describes the validation study and its results.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 explains the contribution of the research findings to the literature and also for practice. It also discusses the strengths and limitation of the study. As the study has generated findings not only on the prepared research question, several recommendations for further research in this field are also provided.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The demographic change and the war for talent

It may be unusual to start a literature review with a chapter on the war for talent; however, this challenge is something so influential that it should at least be mentioned at the beginning of this study. Some may argue that during the current times in Europe with financial and economic crisis accompanied with questions of principle like the Euro currency and worrisome economic developments and high unemployment in many European countries, the question of finding staff may not be an urgent one. This opinion is hard to contradict on a general level. Nevertheless, when there is discussion about the current economic development of European countries, one has to admit that even strong economic developments follow an up and down logic and that the current crisis is potentially one of short- or mid-term. When discussing the demographic change, the situation somehow looks very different. In contradiction to the ups and downs regarding the economic development, the fundamental challenge for the labour market caused by the demographic change cannot be rationalised.

The demographic change is a fact that has been predicted by various European statistical offices and experts for more than two decades. However, this fundamental change of the business environment was widely ignored until the beginning of the twenty-first century (Zölch et al., 2009). Since then, governments, business associations and the companies themselves have started worrying and trying to find solutions for the upcoming challenge. Different institutions have conducted research on the demographic change, investigating the reasons, the effects and the precise numbers regarding the change (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2006, 2010; Swiss Health Observatory 2009a/b/c/).

The demographic change is mainly influenced by three factors. *First* of all, the fertility of a country's population plays a substantial role. The birth rate is normally measured by the average amount of births that a woman gives during her life (Schelling, 2010). In Switzerland, the birth rate has been decreasing since the Second World War. Women born in Switzerland in 1970 gave birth to 1.6 children, while women born in 1980 only gave birth to 1.4–1.5 children (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2006). This means a

constant decrease in births until it is below the mortality rate. The *second* most important impact on the demographic change is life expectancy. Due to major improvements in medical sciences and the successful fight against diseases, people are getting significantly older than their ancestors. A person born in Switzerland in 1980 can expect to reach the age of 72 (men) or even 79 years old (women). In 2050, the middle scenario of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2006) predicts a life expectancy of 85 for men and 89.5 for women. This is a dramatic increase in life expectancy creating a longer life for people than ever before in history. The *third* direct impact on the demographic change is migration. In contrast to the beginning of the twentieth century, Switzerland has been very successful in attracting immigrants during the last two decades. When mortality exceeds the birth rate of the population, migration has a high impact on the population. Considering all of this, the Swiss population is expected to grow until the year 2036 mainly due to immigration, but will then start to decrease constantly despite consistent immigration. Therefore, attracting well-qualified people to immigrate to Switzerland might be one of the major challenges for the Swiss economy in the upcoming years (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2006).

Besides the factors that have a direct impact on the population, there are also indirect ones such as: Economic development; social balance; development of health; education and social institutions; technological development; medical advancements; way of living; risk taking; nutrition; socio-cultural change (values and norms) and political regulations (e.g. migration laws) (Schelling, 2010). All of these factors will have a strong impact on the Swiss labour market. Different factors will work and create a war for talent that has never been present in the country before. As argued previously, the overall population is about to decrease within the next few decades in Germany as well as in Switzerland. That does not yet sound dramatic. However, the most important influence is given by the development of a shrinking labour force. Life expectancy leads to a higher population of older people that are no longer available for the labour market. This is especially true for the so-called baby-boomer generation (the children born between 1946 and 1964) that are about to retire during the next few years, leaving many vacancies in the labour market. In comparison to the year 2000, the amount of people of working age between 30 and 40 in Switzerland will decrease by 20% until 2020. At the same time, the amount of people of working age of 50–64 will increase by a third. One

number shows it even more clearly. Already for the year 2010, a study by Adecco predicted that 55% of the Swiss work force is older than 40 years (Adecco, 2008).

This has different consequences. Older people will need to receive greater attention than they are currently being given, as they will represent the larger part of an organisation's staff. The labour supply, especially for jobs that demand higher qualifications, will also decrease during the next few decades. That leaves companies with the struggle of two challenges. Firstly with the challenge to retain the older staff as long as possible and secondly to attract new employees in a tightening labour market (Zölch et al., 2009).

However, not only the war for talent and the preservation of health are a part of the upcoming demographic change. Performance and motivation among older employees will also be part of the upcoming demographic change. This will be accompanied by high labour costs (as direct results of the changes on the labour market), a simultaneous retirement of large parts of the staff and a change of the market with a stronger demand and purchasing power of older customers. This means major work for the HR departments, ranging from fields like employer branding, labour utilisation, succession planning, to workplace health promotion, HR development, brain drain, facing stronger employee turnover and, of course, recruiting (Zölch et al., 2009).

This situation needs to be described in more detail in order to set the cornerstone as to what one of the main drivers for this study is. The organisations that will be investigated in this study face or will face those labour market conditions in the nearby future. Therefore, it has to be kept in mind that those fundamental changes are about to happen regardless of the current economic downturn that has recently been seen in Europe.

Keeping this in mind as an environmental condition, the following chapter builds the theoretical basis for this study and therefore introduces and discusses the stakeholder theory and the ideas behind.

2.2 Stakeholder Theory

2.2.1 Central terms

Before going into depth with the literature, it is beneficial to clarify the central terms that are used throughout this study. Specifically, the terms *stakeholder* and *stakeholder view* need to be explained to set a valid basis for the understanding and classifications within this literature review.

2.2.1.1 Stakeholder

The Stanford Research Institute has developed the earliest definition of stakeholder: “*Those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist*” (Freeman, 1984, p. 31). Freeman has taken this early definition and slightly modified it: “*Those groups who are vital to the survival and success of the organisation*” (Freeman, 2004, p. 58).

Another definition from Freeman that is commonly used today in that field (Friedman & Miles, 2009), is: “*Stakeholders are any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation objectives*” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).

At this time a tight interpretation of stakeholders as customers, employees, owners and suppliers was given. However, this interpretation would be a bit too narrow. That is why Freeman already began to see that stakeholders are those whose support is essential for the existence of the organisation. Stakeholders beyond the previously named ‘typical ones’ can be different for each organisation. According to this definition by Freeman (1984), stakeholders may not directly be essential to an organisation, but may impact the value creation in a positive or negative way. This means that besides finding the stakeholders along a supply line or what can be called traditional relations, the stakeholder theory relates to other stakeholders like NGOs, different associations, political parties and so on and should be considered.¹

Recently, the literature has provided an alternative approach to define stakeholders (Fassin, 2010). Fassin suggests a new terminology to categorise the stakeholders in the

¹ A full history of the definitions of stakeholders and their development is described in *Stakeholders – Theory and Practice* by Friedman and Miles (2009).

network as ('real') stakeholders, so-called 'stakewatchers' and 'stakekeepers' (Holzer, 2008). The 'real stakeholders' contain the classical stakeholders in the original literal understanding – those who have a stake and a positive interest in the organisation. 'Stakewatchers' are stakeholders who protect the interests of a real stakeholder, but do not have a stake in the organisation themselves. As an example, Fassin (2010) names unions, consumer organisations and other various NGOs. Holzer calls this category of stakeholder the 'stakeseeker' (Holzer, 2008). The third category, the stakekeepers, covers independent regulators who also do not have their own stake in the focal organisation. This implies that the stakekeepers have influence by imposing constraints on the focal organisation. Typically stakekeepers can be auditors, security analysts or governmental commissions (Fassin, 2010).

For this study, mostly the 'real stakeholders' (Fassin, 2010) will be relevant. Differentiating those two categories in this study would not create an additional value. Therefore, the stakeholder approach in Freeman's and associates' understanding (e.g. Freeman & McVea, 2001; Freeman, Harrison & Wicks 2007a; Freeman, Martin & Parmar, 2007b) was chosen.

2.2.1.2 Stakeholder view

The questions that are closely connected in the stakeholder theory with the term stakeholder are about the linkages and interrelationships of corporate value creation and the stakeholder network of the organisation. Therefore, the questions are on how an organisation is acting within the stakeholder network, how it creates value, and finally, how the stakeholders participate in that value creation. A concept that is focusing on that question is the so-called 'Stakeholder View of the Corporation' which has been developed by Post, Preston & Sachs (2002) and further developed by multiple other authors in that scientific community (e.g. Sachs, Rühli & Kern, 2007a; Sachs & Maurer, 2009; Sachs, Rühli & Kern, 2009b).

The stakeholder view sees and recognises the active and passive influence of the diverse stakeholders in the network of a focal organisation and tries to take a holistic view on that network which becomes a valuable perspective for strategic management. When the term '*stakeholder view*' is used in this study, the author wants the reader to take this

holistic perspective of the stakeholder network where an organisation is embedded. This is why it is also referred to as '*stakeholder perspective*'.²

2.2.2 History of stakeholder theorising

As it is not the intention of this study to explain the rise and development of the stakeholder theory in every detail, the history of stakeholder theory is only explained briefly. However, discussing where stakeholder theory comes from and how this influences the current understanding of this field may provide some benefits. Therefore, the author limits this chapter to a rather short presentation of the cornerstones in stakeholder theorising.

Most people name Freeman's 1984 publication *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* the beginning of what we today understand as the stakeholder theory. This, however, ignores the fact that there were publications in that field before 1984 that Freeman explicitly references. In fact, stakeholder theory (before it was named that way) has been an issue in many different fields, including business administration. Literature in the field of Planning, Systems Theory, Corporate Social Responsibility and Organisation Theory has been first to pay attention to stakeholders and develop this approach further (Freeman, 2010). Freeman made no secret out of the fact that he basically summarised those ideas (Freeman et al., 2007a).

His main argument for the importance of this stakeholder approach was the emergence of new events, groups and issues for organisations that they cannot readily understand within their traditional framework of the existing models and theories. This is labelled as 'external change'. He argued that it makes organisations uncomfortable, as it cannot be assimilated into the already existing and therefore somehow comfortable relationships with the organisation's owners, customers, suppliers and employees (Freeman, 1984). Freeman's main early contribution to the stakeholder theory was "*to express it in a forceful and comprehensive manner, arguing that it could/should be used to revise the entire view of the corporation*" (Friedman & Miles, 2009, p. 25).

Since then, the stakeholder concept has achieved wide popularity, not only among academics, but also among policy-makers, corporate managers and the media (Friedman & Miles, 2009). Due to this popularity, the stakeholder theory has influenced a variety

² For further details, please see chapter 2.2.6

of different fields including strategic management, finance, management, marketing, health care, etc. As it was originally formulated, stakeholder theory is about (business) organisations. Therefore, it is no surprise to see that stakeholder theory has had considerable influence on strategy and other related disciplines until today (Freeman et al., 2010).

2.2.3 The problems that stakeholder theory tries to solve

Many dramatic changes and developments of the world economy have taken place during the last decades such as the rise of globalisation, the dominance of information technology, the liberalisation of states or an increased societal awareness of the impact of business on communities and nations. All of these changes and developments represent reasons to revise our common understanding of business (Freeman et al., 2010).

The traditional mindset sees corporations simply as the property of the legal owners (shareholders) who are limited in liability for the effect of the business on others. Concerns regarding this are primarily domestic. However, this is no longer the case (Freeman, 2009; Freeman et al., 2010).

Over the past 30 years, the stakeholder theory has been developed to counter this dominant mindset. It was developed to solve, address or reconceptualise several specific problems that are in a direct or indirect relation to this. Freeman et al. (2010) see three different problem areas that stakeholder theory addresses and tries to solve. The first problem is the *problem of value creation and trade*. This problem addresses the understanding of today's business world with its many great changes in business relationships and the shift of those relationships that depend on the national, industry and societal context. The question in this context boils down to: How can value be created and traded in this environment? This problem claims that the existing fundamental assumptions are not helpful in answering that question (Freeman et al., 2010). The second problem addresses the *ethics of capitalism*. Capitalism has become the dominant means of value creation and trade in the Western world since the end of the Second World War. It has become clear that restricting the attention on capitalism's economic effects is not sufficient. Researchers have started to ask questions concerning the relationship between capitalism and the other institutions in society. According to

Freeman et al. (2010), the most dominant questions in the discussion of ethics in capitalism are:

“How can we understand capitalism so that all its effects can be taken into account by decision makers, rather than externalised on society?”; “Can we continue to divide the world into the ‘business realm’ and the ‘ethical realm’?”; “Is it possible for business executives to ‘do the right thing’, all things considered, no matter how complicated the world is?”; “How can we understand both ‘business’ and ‘ethics’ so that we can put them together conceptually and practically?” (Freeman et al., 2010, pp. 4–5).

The recent economic downturn and the financial crisis has demonstrated that solving this problem of value creation and trade simply by looking at its economics, may indeed create the problem of the ethics of capitalism (Freeman et al., 2010).

The third problem is the *problem of managerial mindset*. Again, Freeman et al. (2010) are quite specific on the questions rising from that problem. They ask: *“How can we utilise and redefine economic theory so that it becomes useful in a turbulent world of ethical challenges? How can managers adopt a mind-set that puts business and ethics together to make decisions on a routine basis? How can dealing with turbulences, globalisation, and ethics become a routine part of how we understand the manager’s job? What should be taught in business schools?”* (Freeman et al., 2010, p. 5). Being aware of the fact that those questions address an enormously large field, they are of major relevance for all business managers. Managers need to know how they can develop their people so they can be successful in a twenty-first century business environment. Besides Freeman and his colleagues in that scientific community, many other authors from different fields suggest that the current mindsets of managers simply no longer fit today’s turbulent business environment (e.g. Pfeiffer & Fong, 2002; Alexander, Miesing, & Parsons, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005).

The stakeholder theory assumes and suggests that if we take the relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders as an area for investigation and analysis, there is a better chance of dealing with these three presented problems and the questions connected with them.

As the stakeholder theory has already been developed throughout about three decades, opponents to this approach exist. The most famous opponents are Milton Friedman,

Michael Jensen and Michael Porter. However, despite the fact that these authors have quite a critical view on the stakeholder theory, Freeman et al. (2010) argue that all of these authors' own approaches are somehow compatible with the main ideas of stakeholder theory. Nevertheless, there are indeed some key differences that are briefly addressed in this chapter.

The key difference with Milton Friedman can be summarised as Friedman's perspective to maximising shareholder value. This mindset was famously published within a 1970 article in the *New York Times* titled 'The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits' (Friedman, 1970). According to Friedman, the support of stakeholders is not connected with corporate responsibility, but with capitalism and only for their own benefit. In his view, the only thing that makes business successful is the maximisation of profits (Friedman, 1962).³ Due to the fact that Friedman sees stakeholders as helpers to maximise profits, some authors see him as an instrumental stakeholder theorist. Instrumental stakeholder theorists believe that when creating value for non-shareholding stakeholders, it actually creates the most value for the shareholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2014). This sole focus on profit maximisation contradicts the idea of the stakeholder theory where it is understood that maximising profits is counterproductive and deviates attention away from the most important drivers of value creation, the stakeholder relationships (Freeman et al., 2010).

Michael Jensen accused the stakeholder theory of being incomplete. In his article 'Maximization, stakeholder theory, and the corporate objective' (2002), he states that the answer to the question on how to keep score is not provided, and that a way to measure the firms within an economy to find out which one is better or worse in regards to stakeholders is not addressed (Jensen, 2002). Freeman's answer to that is that Jensen sees those issues too simplistically. Stakeholder theorists do not believe that the formerly explained complexity of management can always be made so simple that it can easily be measured (Freeman et al., 2010).

Michael Porter puts the metaphor of 'competitive strategy' in the centre of his view. Like other economists, Porter sees business and capitalism in a constant competition for

³ This perspective of stakeholders in economics is quite traditional and even goes back to Adam Smith who mentioned it in his famous book "*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*" in 1776 (book 1, chapter 2).

resources (Porter, 1980, 1985). While Porter directly includes many of the most important stakeholders already in his famous Five-Forces Model, the focus lies on the trade-offs that organisations have to make. According to Freeman et al. (2010), it only takes a slight twist to see this system as one of a common value creation. The stakeholder theory focuses more on the jointness of stakeholders and the benefits that arise from that system, while Porter focuses more on the competition for the available resources (Freeman, 2009, 2011).

2.2.4 Normative and analytic stakeholder theorising

As the previous sub-chapter mentions that some have named Milton Friedman an instrumental stakeholder theorist, it becomes clear that there are different dimensions or facets of stakeholder theorising. In 2009, Friedman and Miles published a book titled *Stakeholders – Theory and Practice*. This book provides an interesting in-depth perspective on the stakeholder theory and a particularly interesting perspective on the dimensions of stakeholder theorising. They intensively respond on the normative, analytical and the general stakeholder theory. Without going into much detail, it is however necessary to be aware of those dimensions and that is why they are introduced here shortly.

As the most popular one of the three, the normative stakeholder theory is seen as the heart of stakeholder theorising (Friedman & Miles, 2009; Hasnas, 2012). Normative can refer to different things. On the one side, there are simply norms in a society as it exists (also referred to as standard practices). On the other side, norms may refer to how a society wishes to live, the ideal or good society. Therefore, it helps us to see how we should do things to achieve a good society (Friedman & Miles, 2009). According to Beauchamp and Bowie (2004), this may relate to two different types of rules, the *moral rules* that are based on values in a society, and the *rules of prudence* that are directed to the personal interests of individuals. In this sense, the role of normative stakeholder theory is to show us what society could look like.

Unlike this, analytic stakeholder theory is the term used when stakeholder theory is not understood as strictly normative. In this sense, it also covers theories that Donaldson and Preston (1995) call descriptive and instrumental (like they label Milton Friedman an instrumental stakeholder theorist). Reed (2002) refers to them as positive and strategic.

Analytic stakeholder theorising can be ordered by whether they are more stakeholder-centric, organisation-centric or organisation-stakeholder centric. Following that categorisation, they can be ordered by the criteria whether they are primarily strategic/instrumental or descriptive/positive (Friedman & Miles, 2009). A detailed and exhaustive description and discussion of those categories is provided by Friedman and Miles (2009, pp. 83–114).

This structure helps to categorise and order various scientific contributions in the field of stakeholder management and therefore provides the benefit of creating an overview of the existing empirical and non-empirical work.

2.2.5 Stakeholder management from the perspective of the organisation

In this chapter we move slightly away from the general stakeholder theorising and look at it from the perspective of the organisation. This does not necessarily mean the perspective of the executive manager alone, but the collective perspective of the decision makers within the organisation. Although being aware of the fact that modern stakeholder theory sees stakeholder management from the network perspective (stakeholder view), in this chapter we temporarily take the view from the perspective of an organisation. However, this is still all from a top view and not from an operational point. Generally it can be said that the management of the stakeholder network can be performed by almost every kind of organisation and corporation, although the network of actual stakeholders varies strongly (Hasnas, 2012). Stakeholder management is essentially the management of the relationships that do exist or have the potential to be implemented within a stakeholder network (Friedman & Miles, 2009). Managing stakeholders as an organisation is nothing new. There is a long tradition of companies and other organisations maintaining and developing their relationships. Labour unions are an example of this long tradition. Those more traditional approaches to managing relationships with stakeholders are mainly focused on those groups or individuals that have something to do with the organisations' employees. Besides labour unions, there have been the employees' families, corporate accident insurers, health care insurers' pension funds and so on. However, those mostly employee focused early stakeholder management approaches follow a fully different focus. Traditionally, stakeholder

relationships have often been managed with the focus to avoid any harm for the organisation (e.g. strikes). This was often done in a more reactive than proactive way and mainly considered the most crucial stakeholders of an organisation (often referred to as '*key stakeholders*' or '*primary stakeholders*') like employees, communities, customers, suppliers and media. This demonstrates that the management of stakeholders was more regarded within crisis management or risk management (Ulmer, 2001).

Today we move away from the idea of managing stakeholders for those reasons only, and follow a more proactive rather than reactive approach (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). This comes along with more emphasis being paid to stakeholders that are not or not directly connected to the shareholders of an organisation (see e.g. the study from Poole, Mansfield & Mendes, 2001). It should be mentioned that the pressure on organisations has strongly increased throughout the last years, often connected to media attention and popularity of new media channels. Here a proactive approach towards stakeholders can be increasingly observed (Friedman & Miles, 2009).

2.2.5.1 Principles of stakeholder management

In 2002, the Clarkson Center for Business Ethics published an article naming a list of seven principles that intended to summarise the key features of stakeholder management. It is not the goal to explain every detail of those features here, but nevertheless it is of value to introduce them to provide a basis for the understanding of stakeholder management itself. The first principle of stakeholder management highlights the need to acknowledge and actively monitor the main concerns of the relevant stakeholders of the organisation (1). That is especially important to be considered during important decision-making processes of an organisation. The second principle mentions the need to actively listen and communicate openly with the stakeholders (2). Specifically, this involves the stakeholders' concerns on issues and about their perceived risks in regards to the interaction with the focal organisation. The third principle recommends managers to adopt their processes and behaviour that are in some way sensitive for one or more of their stakeholders (3). The fourth principle is already a bit more complex. It states that managers should recognise the interdependencies that do exist within the stakeholders of their organisation's network (4). Paying attention to a fair distribution of benefits and risks/burdens caused by the focal organisation should be attempted to be achieved. Principle five asks managers to work with their stakeholders together in a cooperative way (5). The goal of this is to

minimise potential harm or risks that might be caused by the activities of the organisation (Clarkson Center for Business Ethics, 2002). The sixth principle is a bit more abstract and highlights that managers are asked to avoid activities that are patently unacceptable to relevant stakeholders (6). The seventh principle is the acknowledgement of potential conflicts between the role of the focal organisation within the stakeholder network and the responsibilities for the interests of the stakeholders within their network. Those conflicting issues need to be addressed and communicated openly (7) (Clarkson Center for Business Ethics, 2002; Friedman & Miles, 2009).⁴

Those principles are of importance to build a foundation for stakeholder management. They do not only exist on a theoretical level, but are also implemented in practice. Therefore, the principles form the basis for the practical application of stakeholder theory. An example of this practical application is when there is active engagement with the stakeholder (please see Chapter 2.5 for further information). This can also be seen in several more recent publications and studies where stakeholder management and engagement processes are researched (e.g. Sachs, Rühli & Kern, 2008a; Sachs et al. 2009b; Schmitt, 2007, 2010; Sachs & Rühli, 2011).

2.2.5.2 The stakeholder management paradigm

While the stakeholder management tends to orient more towards a practical view, the stakeholder paradigm tries to see this from a holistic point of view. The holistic point of view attempts to understand what the whole network where an organisation is embedded in looks like and how connections and interdependencies are set up within the network. First and foremost we need to differentiate between the so-called stakeholder management paradigm and the stakeholder paradigm that is introduced in the next sub-chapter.

The stakeholder management paradigm refers to the Clarkson Principles introduced in the last sub-chapter. Those principles are essentially normative, but they are formulated in a rather adoption-friendly manner rather than as a sermon. They promote change in management practice that includes different principles like cooperative work, open communication, as well as respect and care towards stakeholders (Friedman & Miles,

⁴ For further information on the seven principles please see the publications of the Clarkson Center for Business Ethics as well as Friedman and Miles, 2009.

2009). According to Friedman and Miles (2009), a 'true stakeholder organisation' would act within and as part of a stakeholder network that is linked and connected by mutually dependent relationships. In their understanding, the focal organisation within this network simply participates in the relation with the stakeholders rather than actively and intentionally managing it. The moral or social obligation that drives such a stakeholder management, is affected by the philosophy of individuals of the focal organisation (e.g. decision makers), but may also be highly influenced by the corporate strategy. In this sense, stakeholders are seen neutrally rather than as positive or negative. In practice, the purest form involves a high level of integration and trust where stakeholders are represented in the board, or when joint-ventures are created for example (Friedman & Miles, 2009).

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that such a stakeholder management is often simply a strategic tool for an organisation to achieve a competitive advantage. In this case, the stakeholder management is not embedded on a high level and could simply be dropped when change in the competitive environment arises. It is also often a selective approach where only those stakeholders are considered that may provide opportunities for the organisation which leads to an unbalance of the organisation's approach towards the stakeholder network. Therefore, many organisations only practice a level of stakeholder management in defensive terms that can be called ad hoc or reactive (Friedman & Miles, 2009).

2.2.5.3 The stakeholder paradigm

In contradiction to this view of seeing stakeholder management as an available strategic tool to achieve the organisations goals, Sachs and Rühli (2011) provide a totally different and more fundamental approach. They base their understanding of the stakeholder paradigm on the stakeholder theory of the firm on the one hand and on stakeholder capitalism on the other. Both approaches apply a stakeholder perspective that argues that stakeholders matter for organisations.

Sachs and Rühli base their understanding of the stakeholder paradigm on this fundamental work provided by the stakeholder theory of the firm and stakeholder capitalism. In particular, they draw on the consolidated knowledge that has been developed by Freeman and other authors of that scientific community summarised in their book *Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art* (2010). In the approach from Sachs

and Rühli, stakeholders are understood as “*owners of different kind of resources, which they bring into action in networks of value creation*” (Sachs & Rühli, 2011, p. 57). The embeddedness of the focal organisation in the stakeholder network plays an important role in this stakeholder paradigm, as does the shift from controlling self-interest to mutuality. They see the organisation and the stakeholders all as actors for value creation in the network. Besides Freeman et al.’s notion for jointness, Sachs and Rühli differentiate between jointness that is based on similarities and threats caused by a lack of common ground (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). Therefore, here the term ‘mutual value creation’ replaces the former term ‘value creation’.

Sachs and Rühli did not only develop this stakeholder paradigm further, but also integrated parts of strategic theory literature and put those integrated parts towards operationalisation by the concepts of the three licences (for the three licences, see e.g. Post, Preston & Sachs, 2002 or Sachs et al., 2007a). This study explicitly follows the stakeholder paradigm described before and therefore takes the view of Sachs & Rühli (2011).

2.2.6 The stakeholder view

This research is also based on the so-called Stakeholder View framework, created by Post, Preston and Sachs (2002) which is concerned with the firm’s interactions with its stakeholders. These authors have demonstrated how the interaction with stakeholders contributes to the value creation of organisations (Sachs, Schmitt & Groth, 2008b). The value creation itself will be addressed in the next chapter.

Post et al. (2002) state that private business corporations need to be redefined on a conceptual as well as on a practical level. This needs to be done to clarify their status and purpose within society and the global economy (Post et al., 2002). They view the corporation as “*...an organisation with multiple constituents for whom it creates wealth and other benefits*” (Post et al., 2002, p. 229). Those named constituents are necessary or even essential for operations as they contribute to their ‘license to operate’⁵ as an institution within the society and the economy. The term ‘*constituents*’ is understood as a synonym for stakeholders (Post et al., 2002).

⁵ The three licences: the licence to operate, the licence to innovate and the licence to compete. A detailed discussion of the three licences is provided in Sachs and Rühli, 2011.

In the stakeholder view it is recognised and considered that an organisation operates within an extensive network with a large number and diversity of stakeholders. The basic assumption of the stakeholder view of strategy takes into account that today, corporations, or even entire industries are challenged by increasing complexity in global business. In comparison to the past, many organisations have to deal more frequently with international or even global issues and therefore with a much broader range of stakeholders today (Sachs, Rühli & Meier, 2009a).

This stakeholder view framework intends to provide a new way of viewing and analysing the role and operations of organisations. For this, an internal as well as an external view needs to be maintained. When looking at an organisation from the inside, Post et al. believe that successful management is able to build organisational wealth through favourable relationships. When looking at an organisation from the outside, they state that the organisation's status within the society and economy depends on its ability to consider and respond to stakeholders' concerns and interests (Post et al., 2002).

The stakeholder view (SHV) can be considered as an addition to the literature of strategic management as it integrates and extends the resource-based view and the industry-structure view of the organisation. Those concepts do not address the question about the organisation's position in society (Sachs et al., 2008b). Stakeholder management is therefore directly connected with the stakeholder view. At first stands the simple recognition of stakeholders and the fact that they are voluntarily or involuntarily contributing to the success of the organisation. This means that the organisations should be fully aware of the concerns and goals of all their relevant stakeholders which creates the necessity for a knowledgeable and respectful consideration by the management (Post et al., 2002).

This directly addresses the question on the linkages and interrelationships of corporate value creation and the stakeholder network of the organisation which means: the analysis of how an organisation is acting within the stakeholder network, how they create value and how the stakeholders participate in that value creation. This approach openly contradicts the instrumental stakeholder management (see Chapter 2.2.2). The heart of the 'stakeholder view' is similar to Freeman's approach, the creation of mutual benefits. Therefore, the central concern is not only for the value creation with the

stakeholders, but also for the stakeholders (Post et al., 2002; Sachs, Rühli & Kern, 2007b).

However, stakeholders in the stakeholder view are not only seen as creators, contributors and receivers of mutually created value. This becomes clear when going one step back and looking at the stakeholder definition of Post et al.: “*The stakeholders in a corporation are the individuals and constituencies that contribute, either voluntarily or involuntarily, to its wealth-creating capacity and activities, and that are therefore its potential beneficiaries and/or risk bearers*” (Post et al., 2002, p. 18). This definition not only highlights the connection between stakeholder management and strategic management but also highlights that stakeholders can be voluntary or involuntary. It explicitly states that the stakeholders can represent four different roles as risk bearers, benefit bearers, risk originators and benefit originators (see also: Sachs et al., 2007b; Sachs et al., 2009b).

By introducing the concept of these four different roles, Post et al. show who a stakeholder is and operationalise it directly. Therefore, the definition gains a managerial-pragmatic character. At the same time, it unifies instrumental and normative aspects because not only does it consider stakeholders that contribute positively or negatively to the value creation of the organisation, but it also considers the stakeholders who are either positively or negatively affected by the activities of the focal organisation (see also Perrin, 2010).

In the years after 2002, the ‘*Stakeholder View of the Corporation*’ has been further developed and applied by multiple authors in that scientific community (e.g. Sachs & Kern, 2005; Sachs & Veser, 2005; Sachs, Maurer, Rühli & Hofmann, 2006; Sachs et al., 2007b; Sachs & Rühli, 2011). The following chapter will present and explain the value creation that is created through stakeholder management within the stakeholder view in more detail.

2.2.7 Stakeholder management and value creation

After the stakeholder view has been introduced, it is essential to argue why this approach is so important and therefore discuss its main benefit, the mutual value creation.

Essentially, it can be said that stakeholders and the proactive management of stakeholder relations can contribute to the value creation of a focal organisation in all three areas. The first area is the development of *unique resources* for the organisation; the second is the *positioning in the market* and the third one is to perceive the *licence to operate* in the socio-political environment (Perrin, 2010). Traditionally, the value creation is seen from two other dimensions, the Resource-Based View and the Industry Structure View. The Stakeholder View forms the third dimension. In a nutshell, the Resource-Based View understands the focal organisation as acting alone, while the Industry Structure View understands one firm as gaining benefits at the expenses of others. This clearly demonstrates the differences to the Stakeholder View (Post et al., 2002).

Comparing Three Views of the Sources of Organization Wealth			
Dimensions	Resource-Based View (RBV)	Industry Structure View (ISV)	Stakeholder View (SHV)
Unit of analysis	Firm	Industry	Network of a firm's stakeholders
Primary sources of organizational wealth	Physical assets Human Resources Knowledge Technology Financial Resources Intangibles	Bargaining Power vis-à-vis suppliers and customers Market Power vis-à-vis competitors Collusion	Relationships leading to increased revenues and/or reduced costs and risks Relational benefits leading to increased capacity to generate wealth
Means to preserve organizational wealth	Firm-level barriers to imitation	Industry-level barriers to entry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production economies/sunk costs • Government regulations 	Firm-specific stakeholder linkages and implicit agreements leading to increased revenues and/or reduced costs and risks

Table 1: Comparing three views of the sources of organisational wealth⁶

The stakeholder view is not something in addition to the resource-based view and the industry structure view. It combines those two views and enriches them with the socio-political view. These three views combine to create the stakeholder view. Table 1 shows

⁶ Post et al., 2002, p. 54.

a comparison of these three views and presents stakeholders who are classically considered within these views. To create mutual value, all levels of stakeholders need to be taken into consideration (Post et al., 2002). Post, Preston and Sachs refer here to value creation as organisational wealth.

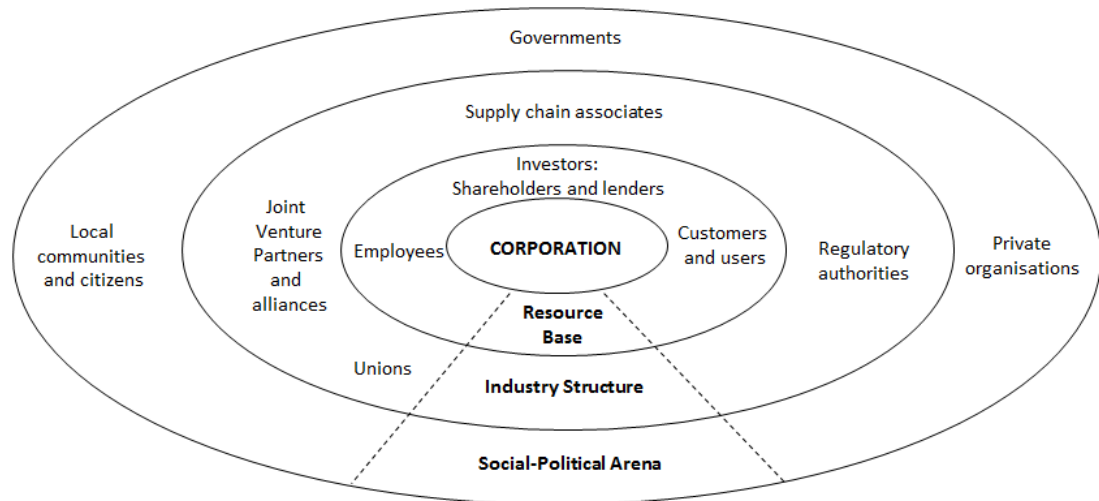


Figure 1: The stakeholder view of the corporation⁷

It has to be understood that all different kinds of stakeholders ranging from small suppliers to governmental authorities can contribute positively to the organisation's value creation. However, arguing only from the perspective of the focal organisation falls short for the stakeholder view. The focus is clearly put on the creation of mutual values and therefore mutual benefits. This means that benefits can be created that do not only serve the needs or have positive effects on one stakeholder in the network, but for the network as a whole. It is about creating value with stakeholders and for stakeholders (Sachs et al., 2009a).

Unique resources

First of all, the relevant stakeholders for the contribution of resources need to be identified. Traditionally from the economic perspective, resources are then exchanged for payment. In the stakeholder paradigm, those contracts (resource for payment) are not seen as completely determined. That means that incomplete or even implicit contracts do exist (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). According to Moran and Ghoshal, three conditions

⁷ Post et al., 2002, p. 55.

must be fulfilled for the exchange of resources. There must exist an opportunity, the involved parties must expect this exchange to create value and the involved parties must be motivated for knowledge exchange and combination (Moran & Ghoshal, 1996). Sachs and Rühli point out that the motivation for knowledge exchange and combination is of greater importance in understanding the stakeholder paradigm as it recognises organisations and their stakeholders as owners of resources. Stakeholders can often be motivated to contribute in different ways and above the norm (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). For example, named employees who spend free time and money to attend training in order to develop their skills can use those newly learned skills towards an increase in resource contribution within their organisation.⁸ Generally in many of those cases, the anonymous market mechanisms are simply replaced by interactions with stakeholders that are highly differentiated. For these stakeholders, contribution above the norm is not motivated through monetary compensation. Rather, the motivating factors here are trust, loyalty, sense of obligation, human commitment, and enthusiasm for a certain technology and so on (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). In today's times, organisations have to be clear about the conditions under which the resource owners (the stakeholders) are motivated to contribute their resources. Sachs and Rühli bring awareness to this point by stating that “...the goal is to be able to create core competencies that will in return create value through innovative solutions for the stakeholder and the firm” (2011, p. 125).

The licence to compete is introduced when talking about the value creation in connection with the positioning of an organisation in the market. In the stakeholder view, the traditional views of strategic theory on a positioning in the market do differ. Here, the focus is either on the position of the focal organisation in their stakeholder network or between the stakeholder networks. Of course the competitive environment of our economy cannot be ignored. A focal organisation may be positioned facing stakeholders who are part of a competing stakeholder network. An example would be the situation of two pharmaceutical companies who may have relationships with the same medical doctors. Here it would be interesting for the focal organisation to motivate this medical doctor to contribute to medical studies and therefore to product developments. In this case, the goal is to raise motivation for mutual value creation to

⁸ For further examples see Sachs and Rühli, 2011, pp. 123–124.

achieve a higher quality of life within that society and not to simply fight against a competitor to reap rent (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). Some authors even go a step further and state that the focal organisation's competitive advantage fundamentally depends on its ability to manage their stakeholder relations well (Verbeke & Tung, 2011).

When broaching the issue of mutual value creation with and for social and political stakeholders, it is important to analyse how the interaction between the focal organisation and the social and political stakeholders take place. One of the key issues in regards to this is how the social and political stakeholders can have a voice in the interaction with the focal organisation (Sachs & Rühli, 2011). The mobilisation of groups is a precondition that enables stakeholder interactions to take place (Friedman & Miles, 2009). Often, those social and political groups have divergent opinions on the issue about what can cause major difficulties for the mutual value creation when interacting with the focal organisation. Here, Sachs and Rühli present their observations from a qualitative study where a Swiss pharmaceutical company and a patient organisation have conducted a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the issue of health literacy. All sides have seen the importance of that issue and can see that developing solutions for it may improve the quality of life of many people and therefore create mutual value for society (Sachs & Rühli, 2011).

As this chapter has demonstrated, the dimensions and perspectives for mutual value creation can be very diverse. However, this chapter has also demonstrated the huge potential that adopting the stakeholder view may provide for organisations.

2.4 Discussion and critique about the stakeholder concept

The whole stakeholder concept is of course not free from critique. As with all theoretical concepts and frameworks, there are multiple voices partly or fundamentally questioning its argumentations, significance and functionality in practice. This chapter discusses the different areas of critique and therefore also indicates the limitations of the concept.

The critique on the stakeholder concept starts with the definition of stakeholders and stake. As often, various authors have discussed those different definitions exhaustively, but a general consensus has never been achieved. Therefore, it is natural that a lack of clarity and, particularly, a lack of consistency are brought forward (Waxenberger & Spence, 2003). Problems arising from this inconsistency can be prevented when researchers are clear about the definition they take and accept for their research.

An overview of other more fundamental critiques of the stakeholder theory is provided by Friedman and Miles. Essentially, they state that the stakeholder theory is an inadequate alternative to the traditional shareholder orientation. The reasons for this are seen in multiple negative consequences that arise from stakeholder theory, if it replaces the stockholder concept as the theory of the firm (Friedman & Miles, 2009). First of all, the stakeholder theory is accused of violating the traditional nature of the relationship between stockholder and manager that is based on the idea that the manager owes fiduciary duties to the stockholder or shareholder (Friedman & Miles, 2009). This agency approach implies that the manager has to focus his or her efforts mainly on serving the stockholders to provide them with a good return on their investments. This critique is faced by a study conducted by Garcia-Castro, Ariño and Canela. Through a longitudinal study, they have proven that stakeholder management can indeed have negative effects on shareholders' value in the short run (and therefore also in the return of the stockholder's investment). However, according to their study of 658 American firms, they have empirical evidence for benefits created through stakeholder management in the long run that are also significant for the shareholders (Garcia-Castro, Ariño & Canela, 2011).

The second critique that is often found in the literature is that stakeholder management is accused of weakening the power of some stakeholder groups (Friedman & Miles, 2009). This is paired with the idea that all stakeholders should be treated equally. In practice, this can be a big challenge that almost inevitably sets some stakeholders or stakeholder groups back from their past dominant positions. Furthermore, the stakeholder concept has been criticised for weakening the focal organisation as a whole. The argumentation here is based on the two formerly named critiques. If organisations need to serve the interests of all their stakeholders, it will take their attention from maximising shareholder value and therefore create less return for the shareholders (Sternberg, 1997). Also, this critique could be faced by recent studies that show the positive effects of stakeholder management for the shareholders in the long run (e.g. Garcia-Castro et al., 2011).

For a further more fundamental discussion of the stakeholder theory, the author wants to refer to the article ‘Assessing Freeman’s stakeholder theory’ by James Stieb who mainly focuses his critique on the value creation and the connected question of distributive justice – meaning how to distribute the mutually created values among the stakeholders (Stieb, 2009).

In Fassin’s article ‘The stakeholder model refined’, he again raises the question as to what extent the stakeholder theory is a normative one (Fassin, 2010). He refers to Waxenberger and Spence who believe that the stakeholder theory is lacking exactly that normative foundation. This belief leads to the accusation that the stakeholder theory is a weak theory (Waxenberger & Spence, 2003; Lépenieux, 2005). Responding to this, it has to be stated that researchers are still in a controversial discussion about this (see also Chapter 2.2.3).

So it can be said that the stakeholder concept has its limitations. However, it does not intend to exclude other perspectives or draw a line between them. Even Freeman argues that way. He and his colleagues or co-authors see it as a “*mistake to see stakeholder theory as a specific theory with a single purpose. Researchers would do well to see stakeholder theory as a set of shared ideas that can serve a range of purposes within different disciplines and address different questions*” (Freeman et al., 2010, p. 63).

The stakeholder concept is not only a theoretical idea, but has also been widely applied in practice. The following chapter provides an overview on those applications.

2.5 Applications of stakeholder theory

After the stakeholder theory was explained and discussed, we need to get one step further. The question guiding this chapter is how the stakeholder theory is applied in practice and therefore also forms the basis for the perspective that the author will take for the empirical part of this study when analysing the cases of two organisations.

2.5.1 Stakeholder theory and strategic management

Before directly demonstrating how the stakeholder theory is applied in practice, it is beneficial to provide a short insight into how the stakeholder theory is connected to strategic management. In this study, strategic management is understood mainly following the definition provided by Nag, Hambrick & Chen

"The field of strategic management deals with the major intended and emergent initiatives taken by general managers on behalf of owners, involving utilization of resources, to enhance the performance of firms in their external environment." (Nag et al, 2007, p. 944), but does not emphasise the ownership aspect as this is seen as a weakness of the definition seen in connection with the stakeholder theory.⁹

It needs to be stated that (like often in business research), practice does not always follow theory. In fact, it is more likely that research follows practice. This means that the application of the stakeholder theory was not undertaken after this concept was published. Harrison and St. John comment on this, stating, *"...we discovered that many of the best-run organizations have already integrated comprehensive stakeholder analysis and management processes into their organizational planning"* (Harrison & St. John, 1994, p. xiii). The same authors have divided the stakeholder environment into three different areas. The broader environment forms the level that the focal organisation has the least influence on (e.g. society economy, legal framework). The second area is referred to as the operational environment, which includes the external stakeholder of the organisation. The external stakeholders of the organisation influence the organisation or are directly influenced by it. Internal stakeholders form the third group (Harrison & St. John, 1994). In those authors' strategic management process

⁹ For this see also Sachs and Rühli, 2011, p. 34.

model, they use the resource-based view to find out how the internal stakeholders can be used to achieve a competitive advantage. In the 5-Forces model, Porter analyses the external environment in order to gain information for the focal organisations' strategic management process (Freeman et al., 2010). Freeman et al. point out here, that the formerly named three areas defined by Harrison and St. John are congruent with the social political area, the industry structure and the organisational resource base as defined by Post et al. (2002). There are many further points that demonstrate the connection between the stakeholder theory and strategic management, but rolling out every single interlinkage, however, does not provide additional value to this study.¹⁰

Following that, it is obvious that when adopting a stakeholder perspective, management practice may be influenced. As the nature of the stakeholder approach is already quite a practical one, it is not a surprise that it has been welcomed and applied by many practitioners. Therefore, the stakeholder concept has recently gained popularity in the corporate world mainly because it is often connected with addressing issues related to corporate responsibility, but also because its application can indeed lead to a societal value creation. As a result of that, many organisations directly address the needs of their multiple stakeholders within or during their strategic management processes (Freeman et al., 2010). As a consequence of this, many consulting companies started to offer guidance and other consulting services to support their customers' stakeholder strategies, dialogues and engagements (more on that in the next chapter).

The change that needs to be realised in organisations that want to take the stakeholder perspective should not be underestimated. As already stated, it may influence the organisation's strategy process and therefore may also question many of the current practices. This change in the mindset of the organisations' decision makers is crucial, but it needs to establish long-lasting relationships and to enjoy the competitive advantages that can result from that shift later on (Alexander, Miesing & Parsons, 2005; Laszlo, Sherman, Whalen & Ellison, 2005). During the last few years, researchers have developed several approaches and concepts on how to get involved with stakeholders. These approaches and concepts are introduced below.

¹⁰ For further information on that, please see Freeman et al., 2010, pp. 105–109.

2.5.2 Stakeholder dialogue and engagements

Getting involved with stakeholders is an important step for the development of an organisation. However, organisations tend to focus on their own goals and bearing them in mind when starting to engage with their stakeholders. Here some authors use the term ‘enterprise logic’. Enterprise logic suggests that the organisation’s environment, influenced by their economic, social and political stakeholders, may result in different levels of attention which is granted to each stakeholder (Crilly & Sloan, 2012). Mostly, this is not only to create benefits for the own organisation, but also to prevent risks from endangering the own business (an example would be dialogues with NGOs for a project that may affect something the NGOs intend to protect) (Maurer & Sachs, 2005).

Although this approach is comprehensible, organisations should try to find a wider and more open approach and gain an according mindset. An open approach allows organisations to be much more flexible and therefore allows them to better navigate through diverse and challenging socio-political issues. It therefore also forms the basis for learning, innovation and even some fundamental corporate transformations. As a consequence, a very open approach better allows for the creation of mutual value in ways that organisations have not expected (Sloan, 2009; Schmitt, 2010).

It also needs to be mentioned that Bridoux & Stoelhorst (2014) have also analysed how the stakeholder management approach of an organisation impacts its value creation. They suggest that not always such an open and fairness-oriented approach is advisable and therefore analysed so called arms-length approaches, where only minimal cooperation with stakeholders is maintained. They highlight that reciprocal stakeholders do indeed contribute more to the value creation with a fairness approach. However, the reverse is true for stakeholders which are self-regarded (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2014). Therefore the nature of the stakeholders an organisation is engaging with is of greater importance and needs to be considered before an engagement is initiated.

There is no one and only way to start cooperating with organisations’ stakeholders. Most organisations that adequately plan their stakeholder management start with mapping their stakeholders who will eventually end up in an outline of the perceived stakeholder network where the organisation is embedded. This forms the basis for contacting the different stakeholders and starting open communication with them. If the approached stakeholders are willing to start a dialogue with the focal organisation, this

may start. For this study, we differentiate between a dialogue and the issue-related engagement. While the dialogue with stakeholders is characterised by an open exchange and collaboration, an engagement is often oriented on an issue that cannot be dealt with by the focal organisation or even by an industry itself. Those issues are mostly characterised by their complexity and are therefore often called '*wicked issues*' in the according literature (see Sachs, Rühli & Meier, 2010; Schmitt, 2010). An example for wicked issues could be the fight against obesity in a society or dealing with a lack of skilled workforce in a national or regional labour market.

The Stakeholder Value Management System

As a basis, this study takes the latest framework that has been tested in practice by several research projects (Sachs, Schmitt, Streiff, Schneider & Sitte., 2012; Sachs & Rühli, 2011). The so-called Stakeholder Value Management System (SHVMS) describes the typical sequences of a stakeholder engagement (Sachs, Groth & Schmitt, 2010). It does not suggest that a stakeholder engagement is a linear process, but it demonstrates the different steps the focal organisation and its stakeholders normally go through when engaging with each other. In the first step, the focal organisation identifies the strategically relevant issue (eventually a wicked issue) and also identifies the strategically relevant issues to deal with that issue. In the second step, the perception of the issues and the related risk and benefit potentials are investigated through the focal organisation and its stakeholders. Until that stage, all is still a preparation for the engagement itself. Following this is step three, where a dialogue with selected stakeholders is implemented. This step represents a phase that can take years to complete and it is also the most crucial one for success (Sachs et al., 2012). The results that may be created through step three then lead to strategic implications for the focal organisation and for its stakeholders during step four. In the final step, the results from the engagement may lead to a re-definition of success for the focal organisations and therefore become part of the governance structure.

As mentioned before, the SHVMS should not be understood as a linear or sequential process. There are many dynamics involved in a stakeholder engagement that requires a high flexibility from all involved stakeholders. It is important to note that time is something that is not reflected in the model. It can take years until an organisation has finished step one. Therefore there are no implications for the time that it may take to go

through such a process as this is due to a wide variety of factors. What can also be observed, is that the focal organisation needs to take some loops from step two back to one and again to clarify the issue and the stakeholder setting as well as to adjust to eventual changes in strategy or focus. Through case studies in different research projects, this SHVMS was applied on multiple organisations by Sachs, Groth and Schmitt (2010) and Sachs, Schmitt, Streiff, Schneider and Sitte (2012), covering different industries. It was observed that all analysed organisations went through the mentioned phases. What has also been validated was the previously named non-linearity of the model and the loops which some organisations need to take during stakeholder engagements. Based on that it can be said that the SHVMS has proven to be a valid model to observe and mirror the engagements of organisations with their stakeholders.¹¹

2.5.3 Summary

This short section intends to quickly summarise the main relevant issues of Chapter 2.5 for this study. The main question of this chapter is how the stakeholder theory is applied in practice. It has been demonstrated that empirical studies acknowledge and explain the benefits or advantages of a proactive stakeholder management for the focal organisation.

When applying the stakeholder theory, different authors have divided the stakeholder environment into three different areas. The broader environment or socio-political area forms the level on where the focal organisation has the least influence. The operational environment or industry structure includes the external stakeholder while the internal stakeholders form the third group (also referred to as organisational resource base) (Harrison & St. John, 1994; Post et al., 2002).

When organisations take a stakeholder perspective, the management practice may also be influenced. The stakeholder approach is already quite a practical approach, which is why it has been welcomed and applied by practitioners already. Those organisations directly address the needs of their multiple stakeholders within or during their strategic management processes (Freeman et al., 2010). This also results in a new field of consulting including guidance and other consulting services to support the stakeholder

¹¹ The author has been involved in a major research project where three organisations have been accompanied by the research team over three years while they went through their engagements and therefore through the SHVMS – see Sachs et al. (2012).

strategies, dialogues and engagements that are nowadays offered by different consulting companies.

Adopting the stakeholder perspective as an organisation should not be underestimated. It may influence the organisation's strategy process and therefore also question many of the current practices. This change of organisational mindset is crucial (Alexander et al., 2005; Laszlo et al., 2005).

Organisations engage with their stakeholders not only to serve their own goals and prevent risks, but also to consider the needs of their stakeholders. The Stakeholder Value Management System describes the typical sequences of such a stakeholder engagement. There are many dynamics involved in a stakeholder engagement that require a high flexibility from all involved stakeholders (Sachs et al., 2012).

2.6 Human Resource Management and Recruitment

2.6.1 HRM research

Human resource management and stakeholder theory may not be seen as much related fields at first glance.¹² However, the connection of those two fields was the main driver when this research idea was originally created. The author has been involved in several research projects addressing the stakeholder engagement issue with various companies throughout the last few years. It was astonishing to see that even when interview partners reflected about the process of engaging with their stakeholder and targeting totally different issues, they frequently came to mention HRM. Let it be said that it is hard to maintain a constant team of staff to participate in engagements; the value of engagements for networking and individual development and also the consequence that a challenging labour market provides for those organisations which also impacts various fields of HRM. The idea was born to focus a research project on the influence that the stakeholder perspective may have on the recruitment of organisations that have to face challenging labour market situations.

¹² Although the resource-based theory is also acknowledged as the dominant paradigm in Strategic Human Resource Management (Rupidara & McGraw, 2011).

This section neither intends to introduce the reader to the idea of HRM nor does it target basic facts on why recruitment is essential to the success of an organisation. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate where research has already been done on stakeholder management focused on HRM and what the lessons are to be learned from this research. Furthermore, it shortly discusses which fields of HRM may be directly or indirectly affected by adopting a stakeholder perspective. Therefore, this chapter provides the groundwork for the later analysis of the collected data from the empirical study.

As a side note, it should be mentioned that in HRM literature, stakeholders are sometimes referred to as 'actors'. This term is mostly understood simply as a synonym for stakeholders (see e.g. Rupidara & McGraw, 2011), or sometimes used primarily for internal stakeholder (see e.g. Crilly & Sloane, 2012).

Generally, human resource management has significantly developed as a field of social science during the last few decades. HRM has also been underestimated from the companies' perspective as a supporting function of an organisation until the 1980s. In the later years, it became recognised as being a critical success factor for organisations, especially in innovation driven economies (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). Nevertheless, besides the success of human resource science, critiques have been raised. In 2007, Robert Dipboye published an article 'Eight outrageous statements about HR science' that highly questioned the rigour, relevance and cumulative progress of human resources as a field of science. He did not question the major influence that HR has on society, but he stated that this has to be justified through the credibility of HR as a science (Dipboye, 2007). Besides the fact that Dipboye wanted to provoke his scientific community, he addressed some issues that should be paid attention to a bit more closely. One of his statements that has been thought as being outrageous is that HRM research is relevant only to academics. This statement is based on the fact that many state of the art HR approaches or techniques that have proven to be useful and effective are not necessarily used in practice due to reasons such as current fads or fashion (Dipboye, 2007). Studies have found that less than one per cent of HR practitioners read academic journals in that field (Rynes, Brown & Colbert, 2002), and that researchers and practitioners have different approaches to see the world and plan actions. Also, it has been found that in terms of their values and goals, researchers and practitioners differ remarkably. This is not directly a catastrophe for the HR science, but it demonstrates some potential shortcomings. This piece of research here is helpful as it

makes us aware of this issue and therefore it reminds us to be careful when working through literature in the field that sets the basis for this work. Interestingly, in the formerly referenced article, Dipboye (2007) calls for a more scientific approach for HRM research. He explicitly mentions that a multiple stakeholder perspective could potentially help to improve and strengthen the science status of HRM research (Dipboye, 2007).

2.6.2 Recent work in HRM and Recruitment

Today's business world is driven by constantly changing environmental factors from various backgrounds. Facing significant changing environmental conditions that are essential for the success and survival of a company, highlights the importance of what makes HRM a prominent player and designer of the corporate strategy. In the past, HRM departments were often only seen as 'enabling functions' for companies. Nowadays, these departments are increasingly seen as major contributors to the corporate strategy and in valuing the employees as the key resource for organisations. Research has proven the positive impact of strategic HRM on organisational performance (Guest, Michie, Sheehan, Conway & Shehan, 2003; Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton & Swart, 2003; Armstrong, 2008). Literature and practice agree that recruiting is one of the most important functions of a successful HRM (Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

As recruitment develops into a progressive and critical success factor for organisational strategy, it also incites research interest on other related topics. Looking at the recent publications in the field of recruitment, several topics can be highlighted. While the issue of Green HRM is mainly covered in the literature, some of its topics can be connected to recruitment issues. The idea of Green HRM is that the topic of environmental sustainability is also an issue for the HR departments of organisations. It represents a more sustainable approach of HR activities not only regarding the environment, but is also promoted in societal terms and in the exchange with stakeholders (Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour & Muller, 2011). The goal is to positively influence the employees' morale, which may lead to positive contributions such as an improvement in retention or a better public image. The implementation of such Green HRM practices also starts to influence recruitment practice (Cherian & Jacob, 2012).

Another increasingly prominent topic in this field is e-HRM. Electronic HRM allows organisations to reduce their recruitment costs by streamlining HRM practices and by improving HR service deliveries. This is particularly important because recruitment nowadays depends primarily on electronic processes (Bondarouk, Ruël & van der Heijden, 2009; Furtmueller, Wilderom & Tate, 2011; Marler & Fisher 2012). The third underlined topic is the connection between HRM and ethics. Research shows that while ethics has been picked out as a central theme in other business fields, it is underdeveloped in the HRM and recruitment literature. Greenwood and Freeman call for deeper analysis of ethics in HRM to serve the interest of the legitimate stakeholders (Greenwood & Freeman, 2011; Greenwood 2012). A fourth field of studies are the people working in HR and who therefore as individuals may influence the recruitment practice. Also the wider constitutional context in which they are embedded in (which can also be referred to as cultural environment), has recently been studied in connection with the issue of power which those positions imply (Rupidara & McGraw, 2011). Another dominant area is Global Staffing. Recent studies show various case studies on recruitment practice within Multinational Enterprises (MNEs), mostly covering challenges in different locations and considerations of the characteristic of MNEs. Only within the field of global staffing are external stakeholders mentioned as important factors for success (Collings, Scrullion & Dowling, 2009). Overall, it can be said that within the other recent publications on recruitment, the role of external stakeholders is widely ignored. If articles mention the importance of external stakeholders that are explicitly not directly connected to the value chain, then they are mostly seen as a risk factor (Sarkaris, Gonzalez-Torre & Adenso-Diaz, 2010).

2.6.3 Recruiting and employer branding

The efforts made by organisations are not only depending on the work of the involved HR specialists. The effects of the organisation's branding as an employer can also have an influence on the success of recruitment efforts. This section summarises the current state of the literature in employer branding, introducing the recent fields of research in this area.

Employer branding arose from different areas including marketing, organisational behaviour and business management. In the activities connected to employer branding,

the principles of marketing are being applied. The idea is to communicate the brand as a unique and also particular employment experience. The audience to which this is targeted is mainly the current and the potential employees (Edwards, 2010). In his 2010 article, Martin Edwards discusses the different views for defining employer branding. The reason for this lies in the different origins of the approach that have only at a later stage been partly overtaken by the human resource field (Edwards, 2010). A basic definition of employer branding is provided by Martin and Beaumont who state that employer branding involves the management of a “...company’s image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires” (Martin & Beaumont, 2003, p. 15).

This approach has already made clear that this perspective of employer branding targets both potentially new employees and current employees. This means that this approach is more than simply a tool to enhance recruitment. Dell and Ainspan pick up that fact in their definition by writing:

“The employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It encompasses the firm’s values, systems, policies, and behaviours toward the objectives of attracting, motivating, and retaining the firm’s current and potential employees” (Dell & Ainspan, 2001, p. 10).

As argued by Thompson and Bunderson (2003), this indicates that employer branding is more than marketing a simple package of financial, functional and psychological benefits that the company provides.

The argument of Thompson and Bunderson is indeed an important issue for this project. It is not the intention of the author to consider hard facts of the employer branding such as the economic and financial rewards provided by an organisation. The focus is clearly set on the soft issues such as the communication of the corporate values and principles as part of the full package of employer branding. The author does not intend to investigate the whole package of employer branding but rather focus on those aspects that may be affected by an organisation’s perspective of the stakeholder network.

For over a decade, the literature on employer branding has been growing and research is being done in multiple areas in this regard. A significant part of the literature on employer branding looks at the actual practice of employer branding and therefore uses

case studies to get a deeper insight and find the best practices (e.g. on Yahoo! by Sartain, 2005). Some further literature on case studies tries to investigate the effectiveness of different employer branding approaches, how it can be measured or compared (e.g. Maxwell & Knox, 2010; King, Grace & Funk, 2012), or providing insights into other cultures or countries (e.g. the United Arab Emirates by Forstenlechner, Madi, Selim & Rutledge, 2012). Another area of the literature concentrates on the actual execution of employer branding and the usage of modern social media opportunities or general information technology (Strohmeier, 2013).

The literature also looks at the consequences of employer branding for organisations. For example, Wilden, Gudergan & Lings (2010) investigated the strategic implications of employer branding by analysing the perceptions that employees and potential employees have towards the organisation. Davis (2008) has surveyed more than 800 managers from 17 organisations to investigate the different influences of employer branding on those organisations' managers. However, the biggest interest for this study is on another comparably small area of literature in employer branding. Research has already touched upon the field of sustainable management and corporate social responsibility (App, Merk & Büttgen, 2012), which has some similarities with the stakeholder theory and the stakeholder view. Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen even state that in employer branding, more stakeholder and relationship thinking needs to be applied (Aggerholm et al., 2011).

For this project, the limitations are seen in the extent of how we look at employer branding. In this regard, the author mostly focuses on the marketing aspects of employer branding that may contribute to the success of an organisation's recruitment efforts. Nevertheless, as stated, the author is well aware of the fact that employer branding is more than this and therefore keeps an open mind for the other mentioned aspects of employer branding that can positively influence an organisation's performance in recruitment.

2.6.4 Supporting recruitment: retention and talent management

When conducting research on recruitment, related fields such as retention or talent management cannot be ignored. While recruitment serves to find new staff for an

organisation, retention management focuses on retaining the current staff as long as possible. New personnel have to be found, hired, inducted, trained and developed. This process creates high costs for organisations (James & Mathew, 2012). In the literature there is common consensus on the importance of retention management. Plenty of research has been done on finding factors that make employees stay with an organisation and to create models on those retention impact factors (e.g. Hausknecht, Rodda & Howard, 2009). The literature mostly agrees that retention is directly connected to recruitment. However, retention is also perceived to be one of the biggest challenges for HRM (Lehmann, Dieleman & Martineau, 2008). Similar to the existing recruitment literature, external stakeholders play a minor role and are mostly connected with risk management issues (Buchan, 2004). When writing about the role of recruitment and retention in HRM, talent management is also worth mentioning. The field of talent management in business research is comparably new. Therefore, it is necessary to mention it as talent management, which involves attracting, developing and retaining staff for organisations (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). The literature here focuses on the shortage of high-qualified talents. Despite the global economic slowdown, talent management remains an important aspect due to the demographic change (Hughes & Rog, 2008; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). It is argued that the field of talent management can be investigated without significantly concerning the external stakeholder network of the organisation (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). In general, it can be said that the field of talent management is in its infancy in comparison to HRM, but nevertheless is an important component of HRM (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

To summarise this section, it can be concluded that although this research project focuses on the field of recruitment, related fields such as retention management and talent management also need to be considered or recognised due to their linkage and interdependencies.

2.6.5 Stakeholder management and human resource management

The stakeholder theory, as already introduced, has been recognised and analysed together with different disciplines of science in recent years. Plenty of research has been done in the field of business, covering areas like business ethics, corporate social responsibility, finance, accounting, marketing and many more (Freeman et al., 2010). In

comparison to other fields, human resource management has not received a lot of attention yet. However, this does not mean that HRM is only a recent topic in applying stakeholder theory. Already in 1984, the investigation of stakeholder theory in HRM began when Freeman's famous book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* was published. Also at this time, Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Quinn & Walton (1984) suggested that stakeholder interests should be reflected in HRM policies for the benefit of the longevity of an organisation. Jansen and von Glinow applied the stakeholder theory to examine conflicts that result from an organisation's reward system just one year later (Jansen & Von Glinow, 1985). Nevertheless, the extent to which HRM has been investigated together with stakeholder theory is rather limited.

However, in that restricted area of stakeholder management in connection with HRM, several researchers have been involved in research and application. They investigated multiple fields and found useful application for practice. Stewart has investigated the development of HR systems using a stakeholder approach (Stewart, 1984). Ulrich (1989) has developed practitioner guidelines to assess the effectiveness of HRM, while Garavan (1995) has researched HR development from a stakeholder perspective. More recently, there has been research done using a stakeholder approach for change management in HRM (Lamberg et al., 2008) and industrial restructuring (Ferrary, 2009). Ulmer also used a stakeholder approach when he investigated the handling of crisis (Ulmer, 2001). Some authors also investigated the management of downsizing just a few years ago (Guild, 2002; Tsai et al., 2005). Recently, Mariappanadar (2014) developed a stakeholder harm index which allows organisations to assess the externalities of their HRM practices on their stakeholders.

Mariappanadar along with several other researchers emphasized research in Sustainable Human Resource Management which recently is paid more and more attention to. He describes Sustainable HRM as those HR systems whose activities do on the one hand support the core business of the organisation - as a contributor to maximise value creation - and on the other hand also reduce the potentially negative impact which the HR system has on its related stakeholders. Here mainly employees and their families as well as their communities are referred to. The idea of Sustainable HRM is that those two sides do not necessarily contradict, but may even mutually reinforce each other (Mariappanadar, 2003). This evolving field of HRM research suggests that more focus should be put on shareholders and stakeholders. However, as Kramar (2013) puts it, the

existing literature on sustainable HRM is very diverse and a 'piecemeal'. This is also reflected in the terminology where Sustainable HRM is also understood under the term 'HR Sustainability' or 'Sustainable Work Systems' (Mariappanadar, 2014). Also different views of Sustainability HRM can be clustered. Kramar (2013) basically identified a group of researchers that focuses on the connection between environmental management and HRM and which has some overlaps with Green HRM. Another group focuses on the capability reproduction and promotes the conservation of HR capabilities in order to operate efficiently in the dynamic environment in which organisations are operating in. Interestingly this group of researchers also suggest that HRM practices should also generate a positive human and social outcome. The third group of researchers focuses on the negative externalities of HRM practise on their stakeholders. Here the focus is put on health issues. Therefore employee health and the wellbeing of the employee's families as well as their communities and other related stakeholders is primarily focused on. They try to explain the costs for employees, families and the government caused by harmful HRM practices (Mariappanadar, 2014). As it can clearly be seen, the idea of and the research in Sustainable HRM does strongly highlight the stakeholder relationships of organisation. It suggests that HRM practices have a direct impact on the wellbeing of stakeholders and is therefore also responsible to create practices which do not only consider the needs of those stakeholders, but also contribute to the success of the organisation.

As demonstrated, there has been quite some research done in HRM and stakeholder management. However, no research that explicitly addresses the situation and needs of HR personnel for the recruitment of staff has been found.

But what is the advantage of using a stakeholder perspective in HRM? Human resource management often appears as an instrumental science that defines and analyses management practices. It also mostly ignores the entire factor of power games and conflict of interests that those practices may induce. The stakeholder theory framework enables an escape from this purely instrumental approach to HRM and therefore opens various opportunities (Ferrary, 2009). However, stakeholder theory is not specifically aimed at better understanding the practice of HRM, but does to a certain extent need to be revised and adopted. HRM has to be understood within a complex socio-political environment involving many different stakeholders in which all of them either have a direct or indirect influence on the management practice of the organisation under

investigation. Therefore, the organisation is understood as part of a politico-economic system of stakeholders that interact, but also influence management practice (Ferrary, 2009).

Understanding HRM in this environment and as a complex system of stakeholders can be of benefit to research and practice alike (Dipboye, 2007). Different areas of HRM have already been influenced by the stakeholder theory. Albinger and Freeman point out that the influence of stakeholder theory on HRM is at least partially the result of its positive influence on performance (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Greening & Turban, 2000).

Overall, the literature demonstrates that stakeholder theory could be used to explain why some HRM strategies work better than others (Dipboye, 2007). In addition, the work has only just begun on developing HR systems that take advantage of the relationships of organisations with their external stakeholders and information that is obtained through those relationships (Guild, 2002; Ulmer, 2001). Those studies have shown positive signs of impact that stakeholder engagement might have on certain disciplines of HRM such as recruitment (Greenwood and Simmons, 2004; Dipboye, 2007; Ferrary, 2009). Therefore, learning more about the connection of stakeholder management and recruiting has the potential to add value to that scientific discussion.

2.6.6 The stakeholder network for HRM and recruitment

An important basis for this research is to show how authors in the field of stakeholder management as well as in the field of HRM see the network that surrounds an organisation or the network where an organisation is embedded. The intention of this chapter is not to only show how different authors see an entire organisation embedded in a network. More importantly, it is beneficial to show the main stakeholders relevant for the HR department of the focal organisation and how the network looks from the perspective of the HRM.

In his 2009 article ‘A stakeholder’s perspective on Human Resource Management’, Ferrary created an overview of external stakeholders that are relevant for an organisation’s HR department (see Table 2). This overview does not only name those stakeholders. Ferrary also investigated those stakeholders’ interests that may also

influence or even drive their willingness for a potential stakeholder engagement. When having a look at the named actors or stakeholders, it is clearly visible that Ferrary had a closer look at the political side covering different political representatives (Ferrary, 2009).

System of stakeholders

Actor	Interests	Means of action	Justifying principle
Managing Director	Salary, job, security, status	Authority, information, delegation	Firm's economic performance
Employee	Salary, job security	Passive resistance, strike, competition	Contribution to firm, law
Trade Union	Representation, negotiating power, status	Representation, rules, strike	Defending workers
Member of Board	Indemnity, dividend, share value	Vote, legal, competence	Capitalist ideology, law
Shareholder	Dividend, share value	Vote, transfer of shares	Capitalist ideology
Client	Minimum price, maximum quality	Competition	Market forces
Supplier	Maximum price, minimum quality	Competition	Market forces
Competitor	Growth, profit	Strategy	Market forces
Consultant/Chartered Accountant	Growth, profit	Demand, network	Law
Merchant Banker	Growth, profit	Demand, network	Market forces
Lawyer	Growth, profit	Demand, network	Law
Member of professional association	Company interests	Lobbying	Market forces
Member of consumer association	Minimum price, maximum quality	Lobbying, media publicity	Defending minorities
Financial analyst	Reliability of information, status, salary	Grading	Transparency of information
Journalist	Event, reliability of information, status, salary	Publication	Transparency of information
National elected representative	Reelection, taxes, national employment	Use of force, law making, subsidies	National public welfare
Local elected representative	Reelection, taxes, local employment	Subsidies	Local public welfare, law
National official	Respect of laws and administrative rules	Law courts, fines, use of force	Public welfare, law
European official	Respect of laws of competition	Law courts, fines	European public welfare

Table 2: System of stakeholders¹³¹³ Ferrary, 2009, p. 39.

As mentioned above, it is not only necessary to see the organisation's HR department in the surrounding network, but to see it being embedded in the stakeholder network. This implies that on the one hand we have to step back from the idea that the focal department is in any case the centre of a network. Furthermore, the attention needs not only to be paid to the connections between the department and its stakeholders, but also on interlinks between the stakeholders themselves. This is the crucial difference between a traditional perspective on the stakeholder network and the new perspective or understanding of it. Ferrary used the example of a director in an organisation to demonstrate a politico-economic system centred on him or her on the one hand, and on the other hand a director who is embedded in the stakeholder network where he or she is active (Ferrary, 2009).

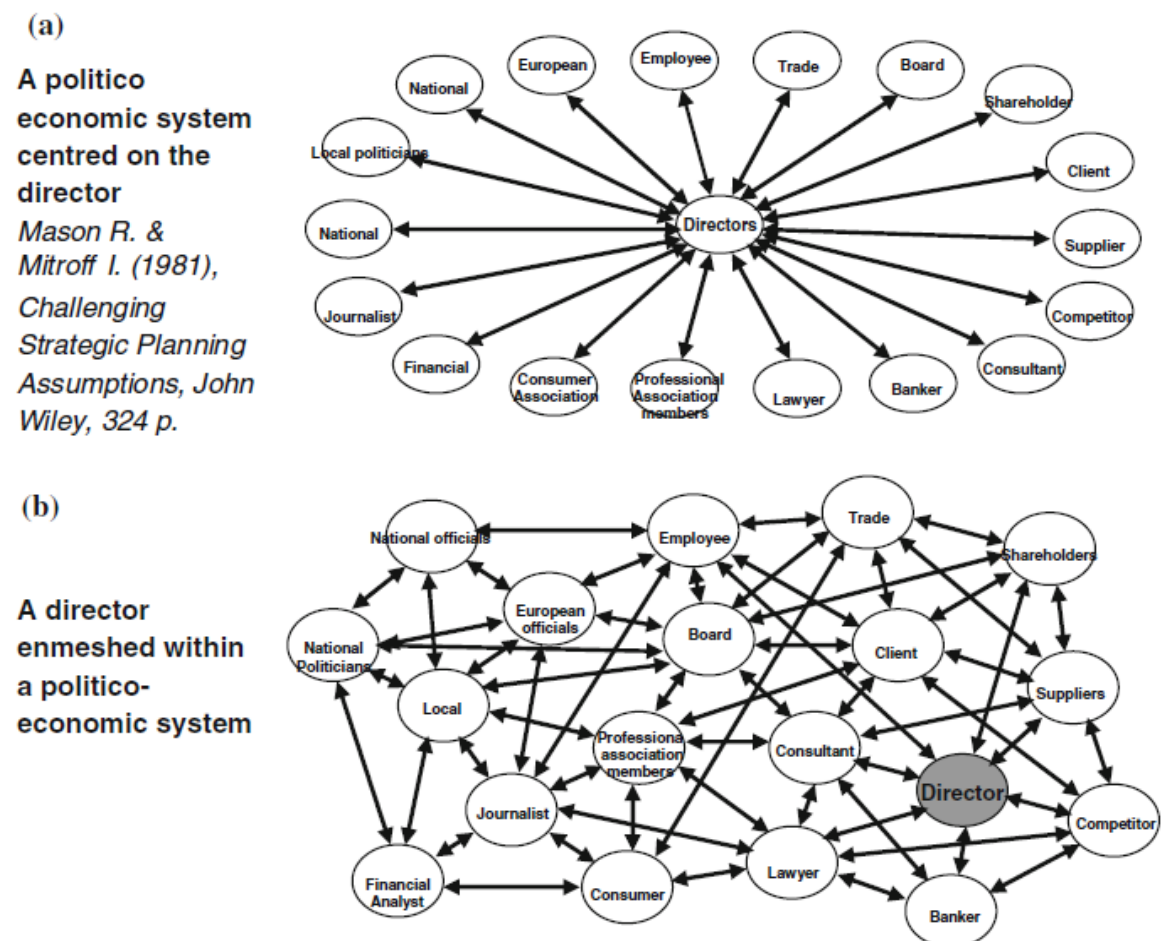


Figure 2: A politico economic system centred on a director and embedded in the system¹⁴

¹⁴ Ferrary, 2009, p. 40.

In Freeman's 2010 book *Strategic Management*, he shows the HR department of an organisation together with its relevant stakeholders (see Figure 3 below). Unlike the model from Ferrary, Freeman does not provide a network view where the department is embedded in the stakeholder network. Therefore, it serves only for providing a second side on the list of potential stakeholders existing for HR departments. However, Freeman's model is focused on the activities of HRM with the HR manager in the centre mainly covering the central stakeholders. In contradiction to Ferrary, Freeman leaves out those stakeholders who are not necessarily of great importance or have direct connections to the HR department. Therefore, Freeman's model is considered to be of greater importance to this piece of research despite the fact that it does not show the embeddedness of the HR department in the stakeholder network.

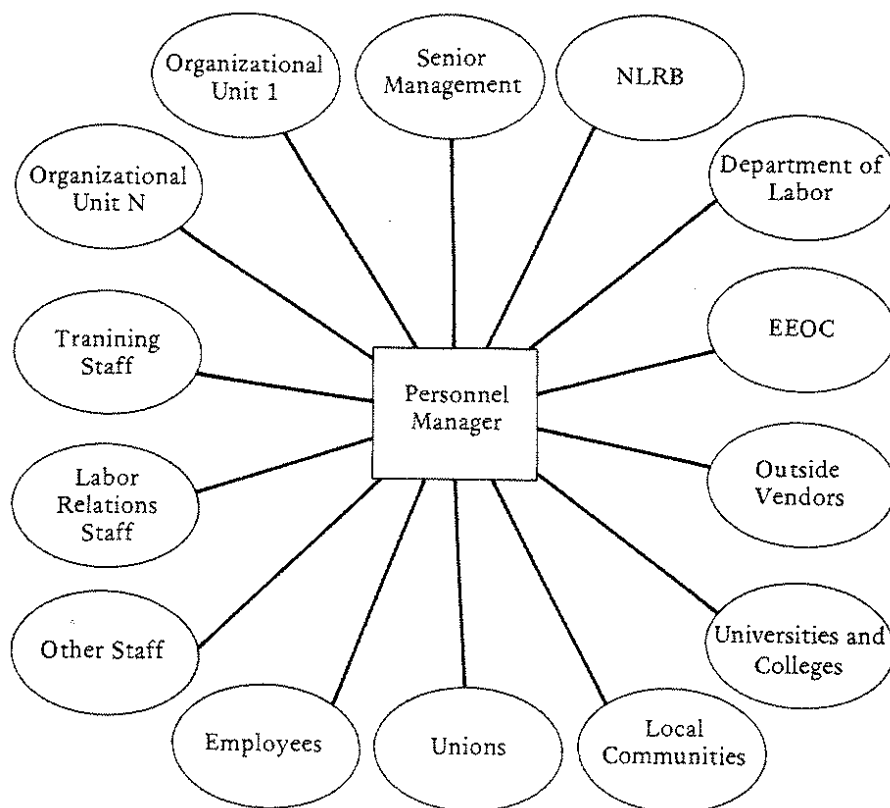


Figure 3: Typical stakeholder map for personnel managers¹⁵

In this regard, it has to be stated that there is not one list of stakeholders or one system that can provide a full overview of the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, not only is

¹⁵ Freeman, 2010, p. 231.

completeness important, but also the different surroundings of the HR departments depending on the economic environment, the country, and also the industry. This limits the usage of such stakeholder lists or systems significantly. Nevertheless, the consequence of this is that models provided by different authors like Ferrary or Freeman can serve as a good starting point for an investigation. However, if the intention is to get a full overview of the stakeholder network of an organisation's HR department, an internal and external investigation has to be undertaken.¹⁶

When the stakeholder network of an organisation's HR department has been mapped and the connections to the stakeholders as well as the linkages among the stakeholders have to a certain extent been researched, the next phase can be tackled.¹⁷ The first basic and logical step is the simple recognition of such a stakeholder map that demonstrates the linkages. Out of the reflection with that map and therefore the adoption of the stakeholder perspective, potential risks and benefits of an active management of that network can be defined.

Potential risks and benefits for recruitment

Providing a complete list of potential risks and benefits for the recruitment of an organisation arising from a change of perspective is not possible. Naturally, for this a basic list needs to be set up which then is reflected on and also extended during the interviews following the idea of the grounded theory. A start for such a list of potential benefits and risks is provided by Sachs et al. (2007a). Throughout several in-depth case studies, Sachs, Rühli and Kern have been able to come up with a list of potential benefits and risks that have been mentioned during multiple interviews and multiple organisations in connection with stakeholder engagements. However, the usage of this code list is of limited value as it covers the perceived risks and benefits only on a very general level. That means that no specific codes for recruitment are contained and therefore need to be added throughout the interviews for the analysis.

¹⁶ For this please see the Stakeholder Value Management System (SHVMS) in Chapter 2.5.2.

¹⁷ Here a reference should be given to Granovetter (1973 and 1983) who has done first work on analysing those relationships or links and differentiated them into so called weak ties (acquaintances) and strong ties (close friends).

Benefit potentials perceived by the focal organisation		Risk potentials perceived by the focal organisation	
<i>Resource-Based View (RBV)</i>	Emotionality	<i>Resource-Based View (RBV)</i>	Emotionality
	Fairness		Fairness
	Credibility		Credibility
	Image		Image
	Information		Information
	Knowledge		Knowledge
	Ability to communicate		Ability to communicate
	Core Values		Core Values
	Motivation		Motivation
	Experiences		Experiences
	Transparency		Transparency
	Network		Network
	Resources		Resources
	Prejudices		Prejudices
<i>Industry-Structure View (ISV)</i>	Dependency	<i>Industry-Structure View (ISV)</i>	Dependency
	Influence		Influence
	Differentiation		Differentiation
	Cooperation		Cooperation
	Multi-functionality		Multi-functionality
	Satisfaction with quality of cooperation		Satisfaction with quality of cooperation
<i>Socio-Political View (SPV)</i>	Lobbying	<i>Socio-Political View (SPV)</i>	Lobbying
	Political Interplay		Political Interplay
	Social Responsibility		Social Responsibility
	High Exposure		High Exposure
	Sponsoring		Sponsoring
	Popular Concern		Popular Concern

Table 3: List of perceived risks and benefits¹⁸

In addition, it needs to be mentioned that this list of potential risks and benefits is not something that is necessarily visible in practice. Those named points demonstrate the perceptions of the involved people and do not automatically mean that those risks are realistic or that those named benefits can be achieved during an engagement process.

The reflection on the stakeholder map and the perceptions about the risks and benefits regarding recruitment is the crucial part of this research and also sets its limitations. Reflecting on this map and finding risks and benefits for the focal organisation and its

¹⁸ Based on Sachs et al., 2007a, pp. 34-35.

HR department is of essential importance. However, this also means that this study does not intend to go much further and, for example, follow organisations through such activation of the stakeholder network or an engagement.

2.7 Literature Synthesis

The purpose of the chapter is to bring together the findings from the literature review that forms the basis for the research question; the choice of research methods and the data collection for this research project (please see the following method chapter 3).

First, a summary on the stakeholder theory and its application in practice will be provided followed by the key findings of the literature review on human resource management and recruitment. Furthermore, those two areas of research are then brought together in a conceptual framework which is later on also used to structure the findings of this study.

2.7.1 The stakeholder theory and its application

In 1984, Freeman's publication *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* became what most people see as the beginning of what we today understand as the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). The stakeholder concept has since then achieved wide popularity, not only among academics, but also among policy-makers, corporate managers and the media (Friedman & Miles, 2009). As it was originally formulated, stakeholder theory is about (business) organisations. Stakeholder theory has considerable influence on strategy and other related disciplines (Freeman et al., 2010).

The management of stakeholder networks can be performed by almost every kind of organisation and corporation, although the network of actual stakeholders varies strongly (Hasnas, 2012). Stakeholder management is essentially the management of the relationships that do exist or have the potential to be implemented within a stakeholder network (Friedman & Miles, 2009). Today, researchers use a more proactive rather than reactive approach when engaging with stakeholders (Sachs & Rühli, 2011).

The Stakeholder View framework, created by Post, Preston and Sachs (2002) concerns such interactions of a firm with its stakeholders. The literature demonstrates how the interaction with stakeholders contributes to the value creation of organisations (e.g. Post et al., 2002; Sachs et al., 2008b). In the stakeholder view, it is recognised and considered that an organisation operates within an extensive network with a large number and diversity of stakeholders. Today, many organisations have to deal more frequently with international or even global issues and therefore with a much broader range of stakeholders (Sachs et al., 2009a).

The stakeholder view can be considered as an addition to the literature of strategic management as it integrates and extends the resource-based view and the industry-structure view of the organisation. Those concepts do not address the question about the organisation's position in society (Sachs et al., 2008b). Stakeholder management is therefore directly connected with the stakeholder view. At first stands the simple recognition of stakeholders and the fact that they are voluntarily or involuntarily contributing to the success of the organisation. This means that the organisations should be fully aware of the concerns and goals of all their relevant stakeholders, which then creates the necessity for a knowledgeable and respectful consideration by the management (Post et al., 2002).

Therefore, the central concern for profit oriented, as well as for non-profit organisations is the value creation with the stakeholders and for the stakeholders (Post et al., 2002; Sachs et al., 2007b). A contribution to value creation of a focal organisation is possible in all three areas (development of unique resources for the organisation; the positioning in the market; and to perceive the licence to operate in the socio-political environment) (Perrin, 2010; Sachs & Rühli, 2011).

When applying the stakeholder theory, different authors have divided the stakeholder environment into three different areas. The broader environment or socio-political area forms the level where the focal organisation has the least influence. The operational environment or industry structure includes the external stakeholders while the internal stakeholders form the third group that is also referred to as the organisational resource base (Harrison & St. John, 1994; Post et al., 2002). When organisations take a stakeholder perspective, the management practice may also be influenced. The stakeholder approach is already a fairly practical approach, which is why it has been

welcomed and applied by practitioners already. Those organisations directly address the needs of their multiple stakeholders within or during their strategic management processes (Freeman et al., 2010).

2.7.2 Human resource management and recruitment

Generally human resource management has significantly developed as a field of social science during the last few decades. Facing significant changing environment conditions that are essential for the success and survival of a company highlights the importance of what makes HRM a prominent player and designer of the corporate strategy. Nowadays, HRM departments are increasingly seen as major contributors to the corporate strategy and in valuing the employees as the key resource for organisations. Research has proven the positive impact of strategic HRM on organisational performance (Armstrong, 2008; Guest et al., 2003; Purcell et al., 2003). Literature and practice name recruiting are considered to be one of its most important functions (Boxall & Purcell, 2003).

As recruitment develops into a progressive and critical success factor for organisational strategy, it also incites research interest on other related topics. The recent publications in that field are mostly concentrated on the issues of Green HRM and its implementation, e-HRM that allows organisations to reduce their recruitment costs, the connection between HRM and ethics, and global staffing. However, only within the field of global staffing are external stakeholders mentioned as important factors for success (Collings et al., 2009). Overall, it can be said that within recent publications on recruitment, the role of external stakeholders is widely ignored. If articles mention the importance of external stakeholders that are explicitly not directly connected to the value chain, then they are mostly seen as risk factors (Sarkaris et al., 2010).

The recruitment efforts made by organisations do not only depend on the work of the involved HR specialists. In the activities connected to employer branding, the principles of marketing are being applied. The idea is to communicate the brand of a unique and also particular employment experience. The audience to which this is targeted is mainly the current and the potential employees (Edwards, 2010). Literature on employer branding is growing and research is being done in multiple areas, mostly broaching the issues of the actual practice of employer branding via case studies, the effectiveness of

different employer branding approaches, providing insights into other cultures or countries or the actual execution of employer branding as well as the usage of modern social media channels (Strohmeier, 2013).

The main focus for this study is on a rather small area of literature in employer branding. Research in employer branding has already been concerned with the field of sustainable management and corporate social responsibility (App et al., 2012). This literature follows a similar approach to employer branding with the stakeholder theory and the stakeholder view. Involved researchers have argued that more stakeholder and relationship thinking needs to be applied in employer branding (Aggerholm et al., 2011).

When conducting research on recruitment, related fields such as retention or talent management cannot be ignored. While recruitment serves in aiding an organisation in finding new staff, retention management focuses on retaining the current staff as long as possible. New personnel have to be found, hired, inducted, trained and developed, creating high costs for organisations (James & Mathew, 2012). In the literature there is common consensus on the importance of retention management. Talent management involves attracting, developing and retaining staff for organisations (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). In general, it can be said that the field of talent management is still in its infancy, but stands nevertheless as an important component of HRM (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). It can be concluded that although this study focuses on the field of recruitment, related fields such as retention management and talent management need also to be considered or recognised due to their linkages and interdependencies.

2.7.3 Stakeholder theory and HRM

The stakeholder theory has been recognised and analysed together with different disciplines of science in recent years. Research has been done in the field of business, covering areas like business ethics, corporate social responsibility, finance, accounting, marketing and many more (Freeman et al., 2010). In comparison to other fields, human resource management has not received a lot of attention yet. The following figure 4 visualises the comparably small overlap of HRM and Stakeholder literature.

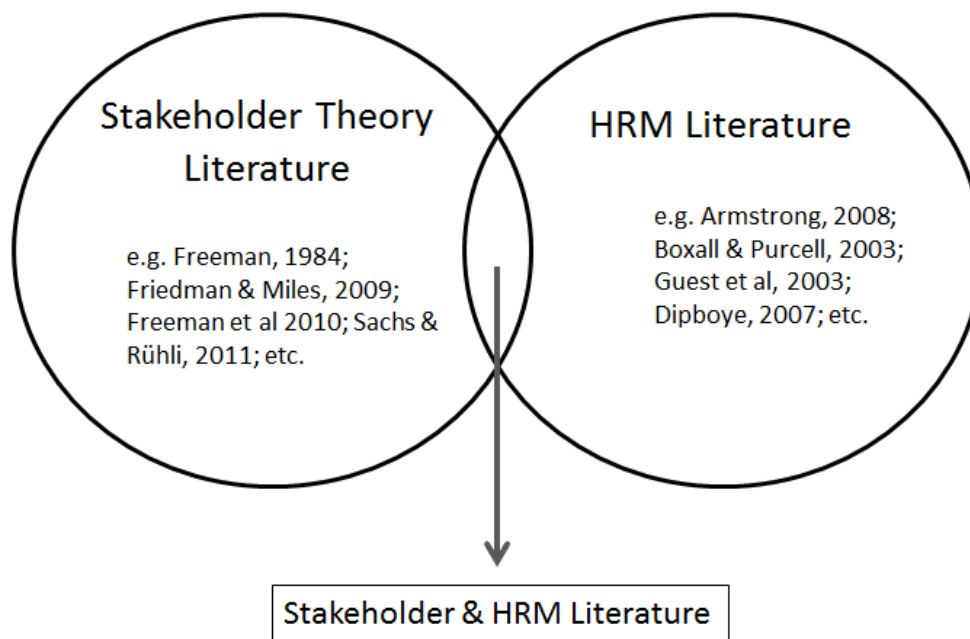


Figure 4: Stakeholder and HRM Literature

In the restricted area of stakeholder management in connection with HRM, several researchers have been involved in research and application. They investigated multiple fields and found useful application for practice. Areas of research have been the development of HR systems using a stakeholder approach (Stewart, 1984), the development of practitioner guidelines to assess the effectiveness of HRM (Ulrich, 1989), HR development from a stakeholder perspective (Garavan, 1995), change management in HRM using a stakeholder approach (Lamberg et al., 2008) and industrial restructuring (Ferrary, 2009). Further areas include among others the handling of crisis (Ulmer, 2001) and the management of downsizing (Guild, 2002; Tsai et al., 2005). The following table 4 presents an overview on the literature in HRM in connection with stakeholder theory.

Field in HRM	Author(s)
HRM policies	Beer et al. (1984)
HR reward systems	Jansen & Von Glinow (1985)
Development of HR systems	Stewart (1984)
Effectiveness of HRM	Ulrich (1989)
HR Development	Garavan (1995)
Change management in HRM	Lamberg et al. (2008)
Industrial Restructuring	Ferrary (2009)
Handling of Crisis	Ulmer (2001)
Management of Downsizing	Guild (2002); Tsai et al. (2005)
Sustainable HRM	Mariappanadar (2003); Kramar (2013)
Externalities of HRM practices	Mariappanadar (2014)

Table 4: Stakeholder Theory in HRM Literature

Ultimately, it can be stated that significant research in HRM in connection with stakeholder management has already been done. However, during the literature search, the author did not find any studies conducted on the recruitment of organisations seen through the stakeholder perspective. Therefore, it needs to be assumed that no research with an explicit focus on the situation and the needs of HR personnel for the recruitment of staff has been found throughout the literature review.

However, the various literature on stakeholder theory and management, stakeholder engagement, HRM and recruitment provides a solid basis of material from which some parts should be highlighted here. Synthesising from the literature review, the following figure shows, which issues or factors seem to play an important role when stakeholder theory and recruitment literature come together. Furthermore the figure also shows the related authors and publications to demonstrate the corresponding string of literature.

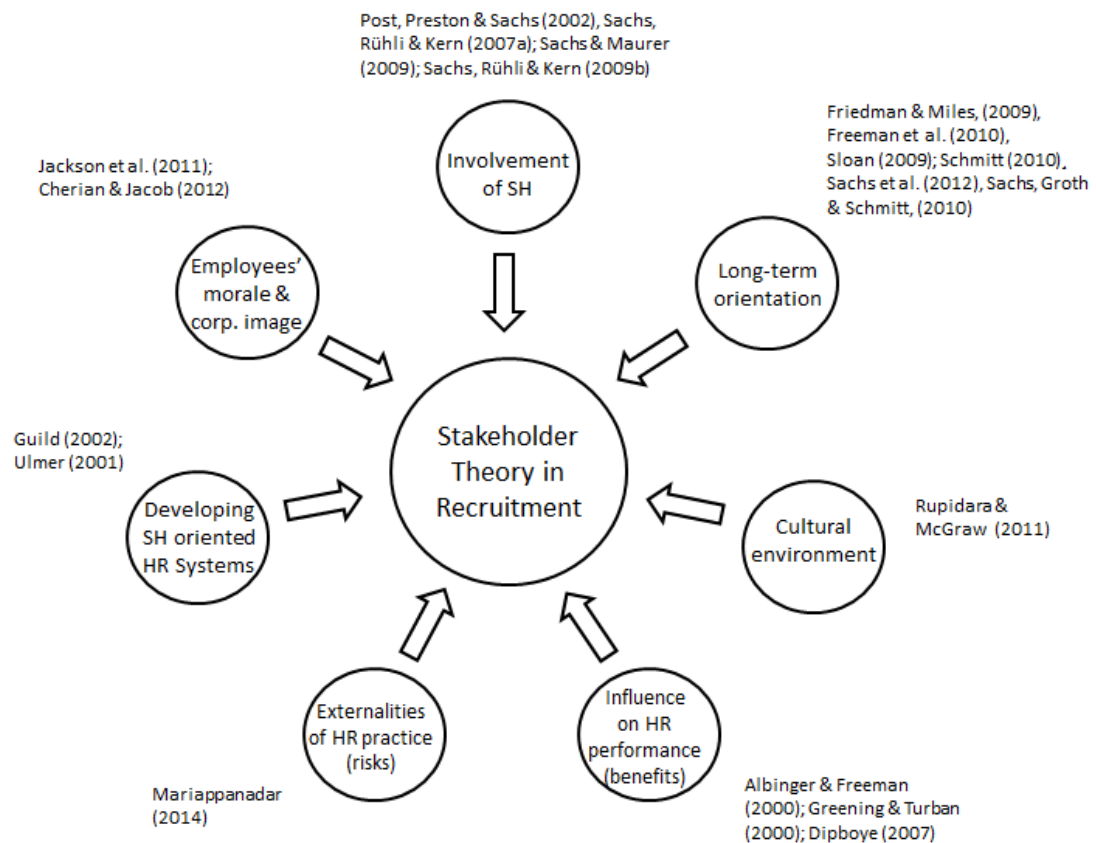


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework - Highlighted Issues for Stakeholder Theory in Recruitment

First of all here the involvement of stakeholders in the managerial practice of HR is mentioned. Also the long-term orientation of stakeholder management which forms the basis for the benefit of stakeholder management is highlighted. Literature also suggests that the cultural environment of employees and more specifically of employees in HR is an influential factor. Several researchers suggest the positive influence (benefits) of a stakeholder orientation on the performance of HR work, which also involves recruitment (see e.g. Greening & Turban, 2000). Furthermore also the potential risks, caused by the externalities of HR practice, are mentioned. Guild's (2002) and Ulmer's (2001) work on the setup of HR systems that take advantage of stakeholder relations is also one of those issues. Following the idea of Green HRM, the consequences on employees' morale and the organisation's image as an employer is also seen to be of greater importance (Jackson et al., 2011; Cherian & Jacob, 2012).

This conceptual framework serves as an orientation point for this study. The involved issues will be reflected on the findings from the two cases of this study (see chapter 6).

Overall, the literature shows that stakeholder theory could be used to explain why some HRM strategies work better than others (Dipboye, 2007). In addition, the work has just begun on developing human resource systems that take advantage of relationships of organisations with their external stakeholders and information that are obtained through those relationships (Guild, 2002; Ulmer, 2001). Those studies have shown positive signs of impact that stakeholder engagement might have on certain disciplines of HRM such as recruitment (Greenwood & Simmons, 2004; Dipboye, 2007; Ferrary, 2009). This does not mean that stakeholder management is necessarily superior to other approaches. However, it is intended to increase the understanding of the impact which stakeholder management has on recruitment practice. Therefore, learning more about the connection of the stakeholder perspective and recruiting has the potential to add value to that scientific discussion.

3 METHOD CHAPTER

The previous chapter has provided an overview and examination of the existing literature on stakeholder theory and its connections with the recruitment of human resources. It has also shown the gap in the existing literature that will hereafter be addressed through the research question and the sub-questions of this study.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses the research methodology, design and sampling that have been chosen to address the research question. Therefore, this chapter can be seen as the fundament of the data collection process and the analysis of the findings that are described and explained in the following chapters.

3.1 Research questions, aims and objectives

The research question

The research question has served as a guide throughout the entire research process ensuring that the steps taken lead in the right direction and follow the proposed plan. The research question for this study is the following:

How does the internal stakeholder perspective influence the employee recruitment activities of organisations?

This research question intends to address the named gap in the literature. Its open and exploratory nature allows interesting research opportunities on this internal stakeholder perspective. The focus of the research question is on the recruitment activity of organisations only. It explicitly excludes the selection activities which are often also understood under this term. To allow for a more detailed investigation into this research question, three sub-questions were created in order to contribute to the overall research question. Those sub-questions are:

- 1. What does the stakeholder map for the employee recruitment activities look like for the two cases?*

To be able to investigate deep into the stakeholder networks for recruitment, a more holistic overview and understanding of the two organisations' stakeholder networks is needed. This is achieved by creating a stakeholder map for recruitment, involving the primary stakeholders, their perceived importance and the links between them. The findings of this sub-question build the basis for the following two sub-questions.

2. *Is there a perceived influence on recruitment and employer branding when an organisation adopts the internal stakeholder view?*

This sub-question wants to investigate whether the adoption of the stakeholder view has an influence on the focal organisation and also on other stakeholders of the network. The influence on recruitment may potentially be directly or indirectly connected with employer branding. Some of the potentially affected areas might be the image of the organisation on the labour market and the creation of a culture that inspires and attracts new employees and reputation among its stakeholders. All those exemplary named areas may directly or indirectly influence the recruitment efforts or success of an organisation. The third sub-question is:

3. *What risks, benefits and opportunities are connected to an organisation's recruitment when adopting an internal stakeholder perspective?*

While the second sub-question is focused on finding out *if* there is a perceived influence and *what* this may be, the third sub-question wants to investigate deeper into those potential influences. It intends to additionally find out if the perceived influences of the internal stakeholder view are seen as potential risks, benefits, or as a potential opportunity for the employee recruitment activity of an organisation and what they could be like.

Aim and objectives

The natural aim of answering the research question and its sub-questions is to seek:

Explanation as to how and why the adoption of a stakeholder perspective may influence an organisation's employee recruitment activities.

This does not only mean to get an overview on the stakeholder network in which an organisation is embedded, but also to point out the connections and the interplay between the different stakeholders which may influence the recruitment activities. Therefore, the risks and benefits are of major importance. As this aim is still rather complex, a work breakdown structure needs to be carried out to address the components individually. Those components are called objectives. By finding the answer to each individual objective, the aim can be achieved. The objectives for this study are the following:

- To collect the needed information and create a visualisation of the stakeholder networks for the recruitment of the two organisations.
- To find out if there is a perceived influence of the internal stakeholder perspective in regards to recruitment and employer branding.
- To find out what risks and benefits are connected and what potentials are seen for recruitment when organisations adopt a stakeholder perspective.

Naturally, the objectives are closely connected with the sub-questions of the research question as those also intend to address the issues that are relevant for the research in more detail.

3.2 Research paradigm and theoretical framework

First, the idea of a paradigm has to be understood to show its impact on the research process that is about to be conducted.

Phenomenology as a paradigm aims to “...*understand the ‘constructs’ people use in everyday life to make sense of their world*” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 11). While a positivist approach is widely used in engineering and the pure sciences due to the fact that those disciplines are areas that are relatively predictable, the phenomenological approach is mostly used in sociology. The strongest argument for the phenomenological approach is the fact that it is essentially relying on individuals, which comes along with a high degree of complexity and unpredictability as individuals do not always think and act rationally. Bryman and Bell explain that social scientists need to gain access to the ‘common sense thinking’ of people to understand their point of view and interpret their actions (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The investigation into human behaviour, thinking and perception creates a complexity that makes it difficult to predict the outcomes. In phenomenology, the researcher seeks to get close to the sample to investigate it in depth. Investigation into a stakeholder network and analysing the linkages requires the involvement of the researcher into the network. Stakeholder networks cannot be analysed in a positivist way (Post et al, 2002).

Therefore, a phenomenological approach is needed to answer the research questions. Nevertheless, phenomenology is often accused of showing a lack of rigour and discipline in comparison to positivism. It has also been critiqued as allowing the researcher too much freedom of action due to the potentially high level of subjective assessment that can lead to dilution. This is mainly due to the fact that a researcher’s knowledge and experience naturally impacts the way data is interpreted. Those points of critique can be faced with full transparency of the research process.

Recent research in the field of HRM and stakeholder theory was successfully undertaken by using a phenomenological approach. It allowed the researchers to investigate deeply into stakeholder networks and related human resource aspects and is well respected in that scientific community (Sachs et al., 2008b; Schmitt, 2010; Bansal & Corley, 2011).

3.3 Research methodology

Research design

In the previous chapter it was explained and argued why a phenomenological approach is the most valuable for this study. The research methodology needs to fit the paradigm and offer the most promising potential to gain the data for answering the research question.

Qualitative research in the field of stakeholder theory in connection with human resource management has already been conducted multiple times by known researchers. This is an important criterion to evaluate the quality and usefulness for the design of a study (Tonette, 2010). In 2001, Ulmer did a single case study with Malden Mills, a company in the textile industry based in the US, and investigated crisis management through established stakeholder relations. Tsai et al. (2005) did a multiple-case study with 18 different companies to investigate stakeholder influence in downsizing. Lamberg et al. (2008) did a case study with the two companies of United Airlines and US Airways and investigated the process of their merge. These studies have demonstrated that investigating stakeholder relations with a concentration on a specific business issue (e.g. downsizing, crisis management, etc.) using a case study design is not only widely accepted but also promising. These studies have shown that only the case study design allows for a deep insight into organisations, which is required to find an answer to the research question of this study. Only deep insights into organisations, and the chance to collect information on the complex issue of stakeholder networks, are crucial. This required depth of information could only result in a single case study or in a very small-scale multiple-case study (Post et al., 2002). However, the usefulness of either a single case or a multiple-case study approach for this study is subject to discussion.

Yin (2009) argues that the primary distinction lies between single and multiple-case studies when designing a case. A single case study is useful under the scenario that the selected case does represent an extreme or unique case (Yin, 2009). Recently, single case and multiple-case designs have been used successfully by researchers in this field (Ulmer, 2001; Tsai et al., 2005; Lamberg et al., 2008). Putting additional factors into consideration, a multiple-case design has a better fit with the research question. A single case design would limit the perspective. Choosing different organisations and different

industries allows broader insights and could therefore better serve to answer the research questions (Yin, 2009). Although a single case design as well as a multiple-case design can lead to a successful case study, it is usually recommended to choose the multiple-case design. Yin names single case designs as being vulnerable because all the focus of the researcher is on the one case which could also turn out to be the wrong choice. More importantly, the analytical benefit of looking into more than one case might be substantial. Drawn for this study, a multiple-case design might offer the insight into different approaches of organisations probably with different degrees of targeting for risks and benefits. This could add significant value to the data collected throughout the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The multiple-case study design offers different opportunities for the setting of the chosen cases. For this study, mainly two different variations are imaginable. On the one hand, there is the opportunity to investigate organisations that operate within one industry, while on the other hand there is the option to investigate organisations belonging to different industries. When comparing those two different approaches of multiple-case study, it quickly becomes clear that choosing multiple cases within one industry offers more risks and limitations. Reasons for this include the simple limitation to one industry, the smaller chance to get access to more than one organisation within one industry and the problems that can occur if the investigated organisations are competitors, which can then also raise ethical issues (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2009). For these reasons, only investigating in one industry is not an option for this study.

Conducting a multiple-case study within different industries would be the alternative. The con for choosing such a design would be the fact that two case studies are harder to compare (if intended) as their stakeholder networks may look rather different and the recruitment may take place under different conditions (Yin, 2009). The consequence of this disadvantage is a higher effort that is required to collect the needed data in two potentially very different environments. However, this needs to be seen alongside with the advantages provided by investigating two different industries. First of all, there is a smaller chance of facing ethical issues due to the competition situation. The fact that the two organisations are in different industries may also contribute to their willingness to provide deep insight into their situation, which is essential for such a study (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2009). This provides the potentially best situation for the author to collect the information needed to find an answer to the research question. Without insight into

the two different organisations in the very different environments mentioned, it would be possible to get the deep insights needed to find out if the stakeholder perspective has or may have an influence on their recruitment. A study by Tsai et al. (2005) has proven the advantages of investigating into multiple cases in different industries when it comes to the investigation of stakeholder networks.

Methods and discussion

The methods used in the case study methodology are also called the six sources of evidence. According to Yin (2009), these sources are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct and participant observations, and physical artefacts. It has to be mentioned that beside these sources, many more can be of use. However, those six have proven to be the most effective when it comes to case study research. As the usage of only one method would potentially not lead to the best outcome (Yin, 2009), the author has decided to use multiple methods. When taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages as well as the given resources, the choice of concentrating on documents, archival records and in-depth interviews has been made. In this thesis, the phrases, archival records and documentation are merged under the term ‘documents’.

Documents

Using documents as a source for this case study offers the chance to follow the development of an organisation and its interaction within the existing or developing stakeholder network over time. There might be the danger that the documentation (as it is secondary data) is weak and might also be biased. Therefore paying attention to authenticity, credibility and meaning is very important (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Nevertheless, the analysis of those documents can provide a first insight that will then be enriched by additional information from an interview with the responding HR manager and later on with the findings from the in-depth interviews. This decreases the weakness caused by potential bias in the documents (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The access to those potentially confidential documents was secured through written agreements signed by directors of both organisations. From a chronological point of view, the first method in use was the study of the documents. Those documents contained recent job ads, statistics on the number and nature of recruitments throughout the last few years, as well as documents related to the human resource strategy, its development throughout the last few years, the past, current recruitment needs and

documents on which recruitment activities have already been run by the organisation (see Chapter 6.1 for more details).

The analysis of the documents also made it possible to draft a first map of the organisation's stakeholder network. This is also of great value for the preparation of the internal interviews and formed the basis for answering the first sub-research question. Furthermore, the information contributed to the interview guides needed for the internal interviews.

Interviews

Internal in-depth interviews were conducted to critically reflect on and enrich the data gained throughout the document analysis. These internal interviews formed the backbone of the data collection as they allowed for a deep investigation into the issue and enriched the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).¹⁹ Understanding the full complexity would probably not have been achieved without well-conducted in-depth interviews. This allowed for the collection of detailed information and led to the understanding needed to answer the research question. The advantages of in-depth semi-structured interviews can certainly be seen in the freedom that this form of interviewing offers. Conducting interviews in a semi-structured way offers the opportunity to create a comfortable atmosphere with the interviewees. It also provides an environment that is not forcing them to answer a fixed list of questions but gives them the freedom to express themselves while having only areas of questions defined that do not need to be answered in a certain order (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

The data collected formed the main basis for answering the research questions. Therefore, information was collected on many different areas. This is reflected in the interview guide (see Appendix C). Despite the fact that the interview guide has been developed over time and especially during the pilot study (described in Chapter 4), its core has remained the same. The interview guide begins with a warm-up and introduction followed by personal information which helps to put the interviewee and his or her experience into context. The interviewees are then asked to reflect on their own recruitment process. This serves to identify several relevant stakeholders of the organisation in recruitment and discovers different recruitment channels as well as

¹⁹ For another study based on internal interviews, please see Crilly & Sloan, 2012).

opens up the recruitment perspective for the interviewee. Afterwards the interviewees were asked to describe their own involvement in the recruitment process within their organisation and recruitment activities, which serves also to identify further stakeholders for the stakeholder map. This is followed then by talking about this stakeholder network for recruitment and some reflections. Afterwards, the questions were more directed on the actual influence which this stakeholder view may have on the recruitment and if this comes with risks, benefits or opportunities. This of course serves to find hints for answering the sub research questions two and three.

Those data areas only built the frame for the interviews. It was intended to make use of this semi-structure and be open to unexpected information, which may have provided additional value and helped to find an answer to the research question.

Triangulation

The concept of triangulation means that a research problem is considered from different perspectives. This means for example that several types and sources of data and also diverse methods are used in order to find out what is "really" happening (Tracy, 2013). As explained above, with document analysis and interviews, different methods are used for the sourcing and the collection of data in this study. Data triangulation and investigator triangulation is achieved, as multiple sources for the data collection and for the investigation into the recruitment situation and networks are used (Flick, 2007). The advantages of using several methods are explained in the previous two sections and form a significant contribution to the quality of this study.

3.4 Sampling design and strategy

Sampling is an issue in different areas of the research process. A sampling strategy cannot be formulated generally, but needs to be adjusted for every sampling individually. In this study, sampling was an issue when selecting the organisations for the case study, analysing documents and interview partners, and also when selecting a sample for the questionnaire in the validation study. The proper explanation of the chosen sampling strategy and the description of the sample is an important quality issue for qualitative studies (Tonette, 2010).

3.4.1 Case selection

As it lies with the nature of this study's approach, when creating the sample selection for the organisations that serve in the case study, a random sampling approach would not offer efficient opportunities of finding the needed conditions and environment. This does of course mean that statistical representativeness can never be achieved, but by the suitable choice of cases from the perspective of the research question, this is neither targeted nor needed. This bias would be a weakness in quantitative research, while here it shows the intended focus and therefore creates a strength that of course depends on the quality of the selection criteria and the underlying research questions (Patton, 2002; Saunders et al., 2009). As the purpose of this study is to find organisations that are already facing a challenging situation on the labour market, an extreme or deviant case sampling would best match the needs (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Therefore, the focus needs to be on information-rich cases that are unusual or special (Patton, 2002). To ensure this, the selection of the organisations under investigation needs to be clarified. General criteria were:

- The organisations needed to stand out in the sense that they are operating their Human Resource Department at a high level and making active use of the opportunities given to them through their position in the stakeholder network.
- The organisations needed to be in a challenging situation concerning their industry's labour market. This means that although they have an efficient and well-executed HRM, they (or most of the organisations in the industry) are struggling to fill vacancies and expect the situation to become more challenging through the demographic change.
- Access to the organisation's decision makers was crucial as a power promoter for the access to interviewees and documents.

These criteria do not represent an exhaustive list of things to look for. They formed the basis for the search that led to the finding of the best possible organisations for this study. It had been decided that two organisations were the optimal number of cases to investigate.

More than two cases would exceed the available resources for this study, but still offer more insights and lower risks than an investigation into a single case (Yin, 2009). The

two selected organisations fulfil all of the criteria mentioned above. In a multi-case design this selection is referred to as replication. It means that the intention of the careful selection of the two cases is to predict similar results despite eventual different situations the organisations are in (Yin, 2009). The demographically influenced situation in the European labour market does not stop at borders and therefore the chosen two organisations are from different, but neighbouring countries.

The following table provides an overview on the characteristics of the chosen organisations in Germany and Switzerland. An intention of this provided table here is not to discuss the details of the characteristics, but to provide a first insight about the organisations which also sets the border for this study.

	German organisation	Swiss organisation
Legal form	Public Limited Company (family owned)	Foundation (NGO)
Industry	Banking & Insurance	Health Care
Amount of Employees	Approx. 400	Approx. 50
Business focus	National	National
Employees in HR	4	1
Defined recruitment process	yes	yes
Average amount of vacancies	Approx. 20	1-2
Competition on labour market	Competing with major consulting companies	Competing with other NGOs & health care organisations

Table 5: Comparison of the characteristics of the two cases

A detailed description of the mentioned characteristics of the German and the Swiss organisation is provided in Chapter 6.1.1.

As mentioned in the literature review, case studies have already been successfully used to investigate HR issues and the stakeholder perspective. Single case studies, such as Ulmer (2001) and Lamberg et al. (2008) have shown that investigating one case can be

beneficial. The selection of the two organisations might allow an even deeper understanding while taking into consideration different degrees of involvement with the stakeholder networks. As mentioned above, due to the given resources, a multiple-case study with more than two organisations as done by Garavan (1995) is not possible and also not necessary to answer the research questions. The two chosen organisations want to stay anonymous which is not unusual. Tsai et al. faced a similar situation when they investigated the stakeholder influence on strategy (2005). Based on that, the two organisations are here referred to as the German and the Swiss organisation.

3.4.2 Sampling for the pilot study

The sampling for the pilot study was important to test the data collection for the following interviews. As it was already originally intended to interview the two HR managers of the organisations as well as employees who are partly involved in recruitment activities, both of these types of interviews needed to be tested. Therefore, the author selected and contacted two HR managers. One worked for a Swiss company, while one worked for a German company. In addition to that, two people working for a Swiss and a German company being involved in recruitment activities had also been selected. This so-called key informant sampling allowed the author to test the prepared interview guides with both types of interview partners (HR and ordinary employee, respectively line managers) as well as in both countries which had the potential to test eventual cultural or legal differences which may have played a role for the further data collection (Yin, 2009). It was not necessary to differentiate that much between the two different organisations in regards of the preparation of the interview. That is because the intention of the pilot study was to concentrate more on the core questions, which are directly linked to the research question and sub-questions. It was any way necessary to adapt this original interview guide to the specific given conditions of the two organisations. So for this, the used key informant sampling described fit very well for the purpose of the pilot study

3.4.3 Sampling of documents and interview partners

When it came to the sampling of the documents that needed to be analysed, the sampling was generally due to the amount of documents available and the degree of access that was granted. The approach here was to not only rely on internal documents, but to also analyse some of the publicly available information as well (for further details please see Chapter 6.1).

For the in-depth interviews, the sampling of the interview partners is of major importance. In this kind of qualitative interview, the degree of potential insight is the main criteria for the selection. Therefore, it was most beneficial to select internal interview partners based on promising background information to gain this deep insight. Those were: recruited via different channels, different levels of hierarchy, working in different departments and also previous employments. Furthermore, potential interview partners were selected due to their degree of insight into the stakeholder network, their degree of engagement with external stakeholders, their availability and of course their willingness to participate (please see Chapter 5.4 for research ethics). Besides them, the HR managers served as interviewees as well. In chapter 5.1.2 two tables for the German and the Swiss organisation are provided. They present detailed information on every individual interview partner.

All in all, nine interviews within the Swiss organisation and ten interviews within the German organisation were needed to explore the full richness of information in the network that allowed it to answer the research question. The used sampling for this study fulfils the criteria of Glaser (1978) to be called a theoretical sampling.

3.4.4 Sampling for the validation study

For the validation study, the same sampling that was used for the in-depth interviews was applied. This means that all interview partners were invited to participate in the validation study. This allowed for mirroring the findings back to the people involved in the data collection process, which in turn created a good basis for the testing of validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.5 Conclusion

A qualitative research approach has been chosen for this study, which allowed the author to collect rich information to find answers to the stated research question and sub-questions.

In the first phase, a document analysis in both cases was conducted. This formed the basis for the second phase that included internal semi-structured in-depth interviews with a broad selection of employees at both organisations.

The data collection methods for both case studies were the same. However, it was not intended to compare the two cases as they followed rather different approaches among other things in terms of recruitment and activating the stakeholder network. Both cases were researched individually and provide two interesting but not comparable insights.

Researchers investigating in this field have broadly used a multi-case study approach and have collected the data through document analysis and qualitative interviews.

As this research has an exploratory nature, the prepared interview guide for the semi-structured interviews needed to be tested within a pilot study. Details on this pilot study are provided in the following chapter.

4 PILOT STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The previous method chapter explained the methodology that was chosen to collect the data needed to answer the research question. This chapter now describes the pilot study that was undertaken before the data collection began. A pilot study can be an important contribution to prepare a successful data collection within the main study. Some researchers even state that regardless of the kind of methodology that the researcher intends to use, a pilot study is essential to allow for a high level of quality in the main study and therefore a better result for the whole research (White & McBurney, 2013).

Pilot studies with case studies can be run with different focuses. On the one hand, the focus of the pilot study can be on testing the methods. An example would be to test the chosen type of interview to find out if the prepared structure or semi-structure in the form of an interview guide works well. On the other hand, the focus can be on testing the entire case study. This means to pilot test a full case study including all the chosen methods. The latter one is a comparably extensive pilot, which may only be run if the main study includes the analysis of a multitude of cases. Also, the needed resources as well as access to additional organisations raise the complexity and degree of needed resources (Yin, 2009).

For the pilot study at hand, the author decided to concentrate on testing the most important method for this study – the semi-structured interview.

4.2 Pilot testing the semi-structured interview guide

The data collection for the main study mostly depends on qualitative interviews. Therefore, as a preparation the author has created an interview guide based on the findings of the literature review and the research questions. The objective of this pilot study was to find out if the interview guide helps to:

1. Frame the interview in a way that allows the interviewer to run the interview in a semi-structured way while keeping the overview on the content covered.

2. Check if the asked questions can be understood properly.
3. Check if the chosen questions and areas in the interview guide provide the needed opportunity to collect the needed data.
4. Find out if the targeted length of each interview of approximately 60 minutes is feasible.
5. Provide the author with some experience in handling the interview guide and therefore increasing confidence (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In order to be able to test the prepared interview guide with people who face a similar professional situation as the people who will be interviewed in the main study, the author defined some criteria for the participants. The interviewees in the pilot study needed to fulfil the following criteria:

1. Be involved in recruitment processes either from the perspective of the HR department or of the line management.
2. Work in an industry that is struggling to find the right amount of qualified people to fill their vacancies (if not in general then at least in several areas).
3. Work either in a company located in Switzerland or in Germany.

The idea behind the first criteria is that the people in the pilot interview should be able to answer the prepared questions from the interview guide in a similar way as the people who were interviewed in the main study. Therefore, a direct and regular involvement in the recruitment process is essential. Also, the interviewees need to reflect on the situation in which the two organisations that serve as case studies are in (tight labour market and a war for talent). The third criteria was chosen, because although Switzerland and Germany are neighbouring countries and mostly speak the same language, there are some differences in terms of how to speak with business partners, what is appropriate to ask and the degree of politeness. To test these differences, it was decided to select pilot interview partners from both countries. The following table provides some information about the characteristics of the pilot interviewees.

No.	Position of interviewee	Country	Industry
1	HR Business Partner	Switzerland	pharmaceutical and chemical industry
2	Project Manager Global Employer Branding	Germany	telecommunication industry
3	Division Manager	Switzerland	transportation industry
4	Project Manager	Germany	IT company within the travel industry

Table 6: Pilot interviews

Procedure

All of the interviewees were contacted several weeks before the pilot interviews took place. Interview no. 3 was conducted face to face, while the other three interviews were conducted via telephone due to geographical distance and availability. All interviewees were informed about this study, the idea of running pilot interviews and the use of the gained results in this report. The following chapter summarises the findings of the pilot study results and shows how they have impacted the development of the interview guide that was used.

4.3 Findings

Interview and interview guide

The gained information to improve the interview guide and the interview is diverse. In this sub-chapter, some of the important findings are summarised to explain what the adjustments of the following chapter are based on.

First and foremost, the pilot interviewees raised attention about the usage of special words and phrases that may not be understood by the interviewees in the main study. For example, the word *stakeholder* seems to be rather common among researchers and also HR specialists, but this is not necessarily the case for all interview partners.

Some questions proved to be not clear enough. This may be due to the usage of uncommon terminology, but could also be simply due to a lack of direction. Other questions were perceived to be too complicated, for example, if it is asked for something under the condition of several criteria. Also, when going through the questions it was interesting to see that one or two of the listed questions were mainly covered through other questions, making them redundant.

In addition to the original structures, it was discovered that it is very beneficial to start each section of topic with a very open question that allowed the interviewee to talk about the issue freely.

Furthermore, some questions or areas of questions seemed not to be located in the optimal area of the interview guide, as they seemed to be more closely connected to other areas than the intended one.

The findings of the first two interviews contributed the most to improve the interview guide. The third pilot interview provided some minor findings. In the fourth interview no further input was generated. This is why the pilot study was closed after the fourth interview.

Content

During the pilot interviews not only information on the interview guide and the interviewing process was collected. The pilot interviews also allowed the author to get a

first impression on the information that may be collected from those interviews. Taking into consideration that the companies where the pilot interviewees work cannot fully be compared to the two cases, it nevertheless allowed a first insight. In the following list, those first impressions/insights are listed:

- Generally it can be said that the interest of the pilot interviewees in the research and the topic itself was quite high. Many in-depth questions were asked by the interviewees to learn more about the research and the proceeding.
- The pilot interviewees like to explain the recruitment processes they went through themselves as well as the processes they are involved in now.
- It opens up new perspectives when focusing on the players or stakeholders that are connected to the recruitment process.
- The pilot interviewees enjoy judging the recruitment efforts of their own organisation and to suggest other opportunities.
- The pilot interviewees are aware of some benefits that are connected with a more proactive approach towards stakeholders in recruitment.
- The pilot interviewees also started to self-reflect on how they actually contribute towards recruitment success and what they could do in addition.
- The pilot interviewees see a connection between working together with stakeholders and employer branding.
- The pilot interviewees see not only benefits connected with the stakeholder perspective, but also potential risks.

4.4 Adjustments

The presented findings from the pilot study regarding the interview guide and the proceeding of the interview led to major adjustments of the interview guide.

First, it was learned from the pilot interviews that for different questions it might be beneficial to provide the interviewee with one or more examples to illustrate the direction of the question. This was mainly found for rather complex questions. Short examples have therefore been added to the interview guide.

Also, some questions needed to be split up to allow for a better focus. For example, it was originally intended to ask for risks and benefits of something at the same time. However, the pilot demonstrated that it is more beneficial to instead provide two individual questions on the risks and then on the benefits to allow the interviewee a better focus.

After the second pilot interview, it became obvious that it is much better to start each section of questions with a very open question to provide a good start in each question category. Therefore, each section now starts with a very open question and the following sub-questions serve more as indicators to check if the mentioned aspect has been covered or if a further question in this direction needs to be asked.

Furthermore, several basic changes needed to be done. This includes the relocation of some questions within the interview guide, rephrasing questions, simplifying questions, and also deleting some questions that were redundant.

After every pilot interview, the interview guide was updated and improved and the following interview took place using this improved guide. Ultimately, it has to be said that the pilot interviews contributed considerably to the development and improvement of the interview guide as well as contributed to getting a first impression of the information that may be collected in the main study. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2011), the results of the pilot study do not have to be excluded from the data set if radical changes in the direction of the interviews have not been done. However, as the chosen interviews were not conducted with employees of the two organisations that serve as cases, the content of the interviews is excluded from the data set. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter provides details on the entire data collection process ranging from the planning of the fieldwork to the organisation and execution. Followed by that, information on the analysis of the collected data is provided and discussed.

5.1 Data collection

In this study getting access to the data needed to find an answer to the research question was of essential importance. While the access itself was ensured through a written agreement during the proposal process, the actual time when the data collection started was more than a year later. This led to difficulties as both of the organisations needed to be convinced that the co-operation is not only a support for research, but may also lead to interesting findings from which the organisations themselves could learn. Bridging this time gap between the co-operation agreement and the actual beginning of the data collection more than a year later was only possible through the understanding of the two HR Managers.

The data collection can be divided into two different phases. In the first phase, several documents were collected. The analysis of the documents built the basis for the second phase when the actual interviews took place. In the following sub-chapter, details on those phases are provided.

5.1.1 Phase 1 – Documents

When planning a document analysis and the connected data collection, the co-operation with the regarding organisations were crucial. As the written co-operation agreement has stated, the author was granted insight into several internal documents. However, it was not always possible to collect documents that were closely connected to personal data, as this may have caused some difficulties in regard to data security. This was due for example by personnel records, which may contain sensitive information and therefore could have caused some internal or legal problems. Nevertheless, both organisations, respectively the heads of HR, were willing and very co-operative in

sharing their information and to prevent such legal issues from occurring. This was possible, for example, when the author asked for insight into the personnel files to find out where the people were employed previously. Both organisations argued that this was a sensitive issue. However, both provided the author with either an exhaustive description of where their new recruits came from or even provided an anonymous list of former employers of their staff.

Due to the sensitivity of this data, collecting those documents was only possible through face-to-face meetings. For access to those documents, the author travelled to both organisations and spent several meetings or several days with the heads of HR to discuss the available material, and to access and analyse it. After those meetings when more trust was built up, the HR managers provided access to most of the requested further documents.

In addition to those internal documents, the author also collected publically available data about the two organisations. Those documents provide the chance to get a first impression of the organisation's recruitment activities and their employer branding and communications concept. The following chapter provides an overview on the documents to which access was granted and which were analysed in the next steps. It also includes the named publically available documents.

The Swiss organisation

The actual amount of accessible information between the two organisations was very different. As the Swiss organisation only employs around 50 people, it is much smaller than the other. Other factors also played a role in regard to the amount and extent of available and accessible documents. Those factors are mainly the extent of recruitment engagement, usage of social media, extent of the documentation of recruitment activities and internal staff development.

	Document	Source
1	Annual Report 2012	Publically available (Website)
2	Several Job postings	Publically available (Monster)
3	Several online news article	Publically available
4	Website of Organisation	Publically available
5	List of former Employers of Employees	HR Manager
6	List of Stakeholder Survey 2013	HR Manager
7	Full List of Stakeholders	HR Manager
8	Recruitment Process	HR Manager
9	Statistics about staff development	HR Manager
10	Statistics about retention	HR Manager
11	Statistics about fluctuation	HR Manager
12	Statistics about time to fill a vacancy	HR Manager

Table 7: Collected documents from the Swiss organisation

Table 7 above provides a list of the most important documents that were collected from the Swiss organisation as well as providing information about the recruitment activities of the Swiss organisation. Most of the listed information was not only handed over to the author but also shown, explained or discussed with the regarding HR manager. All the related information gained through those conversations was documented during the meetings and was therefore available afterwards when planning the interview phase. Details about the analysis of the document are provided in the next chapter.

The German organisation

In comparison to the Swiss organisation, the German organisation is much bigger in size and is in a completely different situation in regard to recruitment. In this much more competitive environment, multiple channels have to be implemented and managed, especially in terms of visibility and multimedia which allows a much broader and deeper data collection and number of available documents. Due to this situation, statistical data about the recruitment activities or the organisation was more readily available. In addition to this, it was possible to access the multiple social media channels that the organisation uses as tools for their recruitment efforts. As with the

Swiss organisation, the German HR manager also took the time to not only go through those documents with the author, but was also willing to invest a significant amount of time explaining and discussing the content.

	Document	Source
1	Several Job postings	Publically available (Monster)
2	Company Website	Publically available
3	Company Facebook Site	Publically available
4	Company Xing Site	Publically available
5	Job Fair Publications	Publically available
6	News articles about sponsorships	Publically available
7	News articles about the awards won	Publically available
8	Statistics about received applications per job posting	HR Manager
9	Statistics about staff development	HR Manager
10	Statistics about retention	HR Manager
11	Statistics about fluctuation	HR Manager
12	Statistics about time to fill a vacancy	HR Manager
13	Statistics about number of recruits per time period	HR Manager
14	Statistics about success recruiting via head hunter	HR Manager
15	Internal presentation about the HRM & recruitment process	HR Manager

Table 8: Collected documents from the German organisation

Table 8 above shows a list of the documents that were available for the data collection. The details about the actual analysis of those documents are provided in the following chapter.

5.1.2 Phase 2 – Interviews

The second and main part of the data collection was the execution of internal in-depth interviews with employees and the heads of HR of the two organisations. As mentioned before, the access to the interview partners was generally granted through a written document signed by each organisation's general manager. It was agreed that despite the

fact that this report is written fully in English, the interviews would take place in German, as it is the mother tongue of all of the interview partners from the German organisation. In the Swiss organisation, the interviews were also all conducted in German, although in this organisation German was not the mother tongue of all interview partners. The reasons for choosing German as the interview language are multiple. On the one hand, some of the interview partners did not speak English on a level that would have enabled them to understand the sometimes rather complex questions. This may have had a negative impact or at least it would have been a limitation for the data collection. Another reason is that people tend to speak more openly and freely when they are able to give an interview in their mother tongue. This creates a high degree of comfort that is generally an important prerequisite to collect valuable information (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is especially the case here as the interviewees were asked to talk about their personal experiences and also share their views and feelings. Therefore, creating a comfortable atmosphere was essential for the data collection process.

The interview guide tested in the pilot study was used as the basis to collect the data from the interview partners. However, two major issues have to be mentioned here. On the one hand, this interview guide has developed during the interview process. Detailed information about this development is provided in the following sub-chapters. On the other hand, the interview guide was not used for the interviews with the two heads of HR. Here, a rather informal interview scheme based on the information individually gained through the document analysis at both organisations was used. Nevertheless, the interview guide was still the major frame for the main study, namely all the interviews with the two organisations' employees.

5.1.2.1 Internal interviews with the German organisation

It can basically be stated that the internal interviews that were planned for the data collection with the German organisation were conducted as planned. As intended, the interviews took place face-to-face with only one exception where a telephone interview was conducted due to the limited availability of the interview partner. The organisation of those interviews was expected to be one of the major challenges during the data collection process. However, the German organisation was very helpful here. The

following information provides details on the sampling of the interview partners, the actual proceeding of the data collection and on the setting of the interview situations.

Sampling

The sampling of the interview partners is a crucial issue in this study. As already explained in the methods chapter, the selection of the interview partners cannot simply be made randomly. The idea is to select people who have a deep insight into the recruitment situation of the organisation. First is of course the HR department. Therefore, two interviews were conducted with the head of HR, covering different areas of the recruitment process and the recruitment situation of the company. However, the main insight was gained through the other interviews. Here it was important to have people who saw the recruitment through different perspectives, not only from their daily involvement into recruitment processes, but also through their own experience or, to say it in other words, their own recruitment channel. Having interview partners who went through the recruitment channels of this organisation themselves, provides a deeper and more objective insight. The idea was to follow a maximum variety approach. Therefore, employees were selected who were recruited through various channels. Additional sampling criteria were that they work for different branches of the organisation, in different departments, in different jobs and on different levels in the internal hierarchy.

Those criteria lead to the selection of the interview partners listed in the table below. It needs to be mentioned that the selection itself was done by the head of HR of the organisation, but being fully aware of this mentioned sampling criteria. The sampling was made possible through the HR department, which made the selection of employees matching with the criteria.

Interview	Hierarchical level	Gender	Age group	With the organisation since	Recruitment channel
1	Management (HR)	female	45-50	<3 years	-
2	Management (HR)	female	45-50	<3 years	-
3	Software Engineer	male	20-25	<3 years	Online job posting
4	Consultant	male	25-30	<3 years	Recommended by a customer
5	Software Tester	male	30-35	<3 years	Online job posting
6	Managing Consultant	male	45-50	<3 years	Referral (former customer)
7	Consultant	female	20-25	<3 years	Dual student (master)
8	Senior Consultant	male	50-55	<3 years	Referral (former customer)
9	Consultant	male	20-25	<3 years	Dual student (bachelor)
10	Partner	male	40-45	<3 years	Head Hunter

Table 9: Characteristics of the interview partners in the German organisation²⁰

Originally it was intended to run about 5–10 internal interviews within the organisation. This estimation worked out in this case. However, there is of course limited influence of the researcher on the actual amount of interviews that the organisation allows to take place. Here the HR manager agreed on two interviews within the HR department and individual interviews with another eight employees. This final number of ten interviews was limited by the organisation. As most of the interviewees work in consulting, the HR department needed to assign working hours to them, as they were of course not able to bill the current client on the time spent to prepare and go through the interview. All interviews took place at the same location. As some of the interviewees are normally located in different national branches this also causes additional expenses for travel and travelling time. The conducted number of interviews was assessed to be sufficient. Although interviews 9 and 10 added further perspectives and additional information, the additionally gained valuable information became smaller and smaller interview-by-interview. More interviews would most likely have lacked new perspectives, as all major recruitment channels, hierarchical positions and seniority levels were already covered by those ten interviews.

Proceedings

The internal interviews were carried out over four days. While the interviews with the head of HR took place first, it allowed for learning more about the general recruitment processes and activities of the organisation and proved to offer valuable information to prepare the interviews with the employees. After that and after the head of HR had

²⁰ A dual student is a person participating in a programme of study which is run by a university together with a company. When there are no courses, the students work in the company to gain practical experience.

agreed on the sampling of the interviewees, the head of HR instructed her assistant to organise the following interviews on two subsequent days. Interviews 3–9 took place on those two days, making this part of the data collection efficient.

As on the first day, only three interviews were scheduled in the morning. This offered the opportunity in the afternoon to reflect on those first interviews. That break between the interviews was quite valuable and led to several adjustments. It was realised that the interviewees sometimes struggled with the questions. This was mainly due to long sentences as well as the amount of questions. For example, there were originally too many questions about the career of the interviewees. This led to a restructuring of the interview guide. The major changes were made through the shortening of questions, and the abdication of some questions that seemed to make the whole interview situation too complex and which were not targeting essential areas of the research. Another finding of this reflection was that the first interviewees had difficulties thinking in networks and grasping the bigger picture of recruitment. As a consequence of this reflection, the interview guide was adjusted in the sense that it was restructured and questions were simplified (see Appendix B and Appendix C for both versions). Furthermore, all the following interviewees got a deeper verbal introduction into the topic and the idea of the network view from the author before the interviews started. In addition, the stakeholder map from Ferrary (2009) (see Figure 4 in the literature review) was used to visualise a network. Making those adjustments turned out to be very helpful for all of the following interviews.

All interviews were recorded. All interviewees were asked if they agreed to the recording. No one declined. Interviews 1–9 were conducted face-to-face. As one interviewee was not able to travel to those prepared interview days, a telephone interview was conducted the week after. This interview was also recorded, using the phone speakers and an ordinary recording device. In terms of interview flow and collection of data, no negative impact was recognised caused by this alternative interview form. The recording quality was slightly lower, but did not cause any trouble during the analysis.

The length of the interviews varied significantly. Some interviewees had long stories to tell, wanted to discuss more deeply the research project or were simply very much into

helping out as much as possible. Others answered the questions more to the point, did not repeat themselves and did not ask further questions. The following Table 10 shows the real duration of each interview.

Interview	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Duration	70min	74min	49min	65min	57min	55min	40min	42min	34min	40min

Table 10: Interview duration at the German organisation

It excludes all introductions to the topic and the last part of the interview guide where the following steps are explained. Therefore all listed interviews took approximately 15–25 minutes longer.

Setting

The setting of face-to-face interviews can be a challenge in order to not only ensure a high quality of recording, but also to create an environment where the interviewee feels comfortable and therefore is more open to share his or her knowledge. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), special attention needs to be given to the room where the interviews take place. Those rooms should be quiet and the windows should be closed to prevent any traffic noise from reaching the room. Also, the room should prevent the interviewee from becoming side tracked by calls, emails or colleagues (Dittmar, 2002; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the branch where the interviews with the German organisation took place, the HR department reserved a quiet room for this occasion. This room is the so-called library of the organisation, where important meetings and job interviews take place. That fact was especially interesting as some of the interviewees remembered that their own job interview had taken place in this room. Comfortable leather furniture provided a pleasant environment. The room was quiet with good lighting conditions and refreshments such as water, juices, coffee and cookies were prepared. This comfortable environment was very much welcomed by the interviewees. It was noticeable that they all felt welcome and were therefore quite relaxed and willing to contribute to the research.

The interviews proceeded with no incidents. Every interviewee was previously informed by email what the interview would be about. In addition, the HR assistant had

scheduled enough time for every interview including breaks in between which allowed for a great degree of flexibility in terms of the duration of the interview. All interviewees agreed to the recording and all were willing to share their knowledge and opinions. Furthermore, all have agreed on participating in the validation study that the author has mentioned at the end of the interviews. Some of the interviewees even took the time to prepare themselves for the interview by reflecting on internal recruitment processes and activities. This made the interview session rather efficient and constructive.

5.1.2.2 Internal interviews with the Swiss organisation

As with the interview phase with the German organisation, the interviews within the Swiss organisation went mostly according to plan. The author lives and works in Switzerland making the organisation of the interviews at the Swiss organisation slightly more flexible. Also, the characteristics of the Swiss organisation – being rather small – made the planning and the scheduling of the interviews more manageable. All the interviews took place face-to-face in Berne, where the organisation is headquartered. Also here, the head of HR was very helpful, not only in organising and scheduling the interviews, but also with the selection of interview partners. The following provides more details on the actual sampling of interviewees, the proceedings of the interviews and its settings.

Sampling

For the data collection with the Swiss organisation, the same conditions applied as for the German organisation. The sampling is also a crucial issue here. In line with the data collection at the German organisation, the author had also decided to run a maximum variety approach with the Swiss organisation. Therefore, the focus here is also on people who have a deep insight into the recruitment process and may see it from different perspectives due to their personal experience. Following this, again interviewees were selected who work in both subsidiaries (Berne and Lausanne), who belong to different divisions and departments, have different jobs and belong to all stages of the hierarchical structure.

Just like the German organisation, the head of HR was a great help and suggested eight interview partners according to the given criteria. This means that also here the selection itself was done by the head of HR of the organisation. HE was also fully aware of the mentioned sampling criteria. The selected interviewees can be seen in the table below.

Interview	Hierarchical level	Gender	Age Group	With the organisation since	Recruitment channel
1	Manager (HR)	Male	40-45	5 years	-
2	Manager (Project Manager Partner Relations)	Female	40-45	5 years	Online job posting
3	Assistant (to the head of Services and Communications)	Female	35-40	1 year	Conference
4	Manager (Head Services)	Female	40-45	4 years	Website (attention through marketing campaign)
5	Secretary	Female	40-45	1 year	Online job posting
6	Manager (Co-Head of department)	Male	35-40	5 years	Referral
7	Manager (Co-Head of department)	Female	35-40	6 years	Speculative application
8	Management Board (Director Services and Communication)	Male	50-55	4 years	Former Stakeholder
9	Manager (Head Communications)	Male	45-50	3 years	Online job posting

Table 11: Characteristics of the interview partners in the Swiss organisation

It was decided to run nine internal interviews – one of them with the head of HR. Eight interviews was the maximum that the organisation was willing to agree on. As the organisation itself has only around 50 employees, interviewing nine of them was expected to provide a deep insight. Also here, the question of resources was prominent, especially as some of the interviewees were highly involved in operative work during the time when the interviews took place or needed to come from Lausanne to Berne for the interview. As already experienced with the interviews at the German organisation, the gained additional knowledge decreased strongly from interview to interview after the first five interviews were finished. It cannot be denied that during each additional interview, additional and valuable data was collected, but the last two interviews did not provide much information that was not yet already mentioned and discussed by other interviewees.

Proceedings

The internal interviews were conducted over five days. The interview with the head of HR took place first. However, it needs to be mentioned that several more meetings with the head of HR took place before the interview. During those meetings not only

administrative and organisational issues were discussed, but also explanations about the recruitment process and the general activities were discussed intensively. Again, this interview was a great opportunity to reflect not only on the things covered in the interview guide, but also on the previously collected data for the document analysis. This interview was a great help to get an overview of the organisational processes and culture, and later proved to be of essential importance for recruitment.

The first interview with the Swiss organisation took place when the interviews within the German organisation were nearly over. Therefore, the knowledge from the previous interviews was used to adjust the interview guide for the Swiss organisation. In addition, the findings from the document analysis allowed the author to focus the interview guide even more on the situation of the organisation making the interviews not only more focused, but also more efficient. As a side note, it needs to be mentioned that all the interviews took place in German. Only one of the interviewees was not a German native speaker. However, the interviewee works in German and was always asked if something was unclear during the interview. This worked out well and no impact on the collected information was discovered, although of course this could have slightly impacted the degree or extent of information.

Just like the interviews with the German organisation, the usage of a printout of Ferrary's stakeholder network (Ferrary, 2009) was helpful to visualise the perspective and explain the stakeholder views. Also here, all interviews were recorded, as the request for recording was never declined. With the Swiss organisation, the duration of the interviews did not vary a lot. In Table 12 below all interviews are listed along with the duration of each interview.

Interview	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Duration	50min	47min	42min	46min	38min	38min	30min	44min	41min

Table 12: Interview duration at the Swiss organisation

Again, the duration is interview time only. All introductions, explanations and the last part of the interview guide where the following steps are explained were not recorded or analysed.

Setting

The settings for the interviews with the Swiss organisation were quite different compared to the others. The organisation is quite short on office space. This is why even some of their meetings need to take place outside of the office building. Nevertheless, the interviews were scheduled and organised through the head of HR. Five took place in a quiet, comfortable meeting room in the headquarters. Only interview 8 was conducted in the interviewee's office. However, interviews 2, 3 and 9 needed to take place elsewhere as not a single office was available on that day. A nearby café was used as a place for more informal meetings. Generally, this was not a perfect situation, especially as the location was highly occupied and loud (Dittmar, 2002). Nevertheless, this situation was inevitable, so the author needed to deal with the given conditions. All in all, those interviews also went very well and the interviewees seemed not to be side tracked by the people entering and leaving the place. The only recognisable negative impact was of course the low quality of the recording. This made the transcription more difficult, but it had no impact on the recording of the provided information. Therefore, it can generally be said that the interviewees felt comfortable during the interviews. There were also no incidents that somehow negatively impacted the data collection with the Swiss organisation or caused any limitations or delay. Essentially, all interviews were conducted as planned.

5.2 Data analysis

5.2.1 Documents

Analysing the documents collected during the data collecting process was the main step to prepare the interview collection phase. As mentioned in Chapter 5.1.2, various documents were collected either through own desk research (public data) or made available through the HR managers of the two organisations.

The phase of analysing those documents was mainly spent with reading and drawing the results into a first stakeholder map (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As only documents were collected which seemed to be relevant to the study, none of the collected documents were excluded from the analysis. It needs to be mentioned that the publically available documents that were collected, were not considered to be biased on a level that would make them useless for the study. Most of that publically available information contains job description or articles written about the organisation (Robson, 2011).

The analysis of those documents was mainly done by carefully reading the textual material and putting it in the context of the recruitment situation of the organisations. This set the basis for the selection of the interview partners on the one hand and, overall, it provided the author with a broad and deep insight into the two organisations to understand the organisations' human resource management, the main recruitment processes as well as the situation of recruitment with its challenges.

5.2.2 Interviews

Typically, qualitative data collected through interviews is in the form of a huge amount of unstructured textual material. The challenge is to analyse this textual material in a straightforward way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All in all, transcript material of around 80,000 words or more than 160 pages was collected from the interviews conducted within this study. To be able to analyse the gained data in an efficient way, a strategy of this qualitative data analysis needs to be developed (Robson, 2011). As Bryman and

Bell (2011) put it, this is simply a framework that guides the analysis. This is essential, as often the qualitative data offers plenty of analysis opportunities, which can lead to a situation where researchers lose track of the analysis, leading them to find answers to the research questions.

5.2.2.1 Transcriptions

In order to do a proper analysis of the collected data, all interviews were transcribed (Dittmar, 2002). During the data collection process, it was decided that the author would transcribe all interviews himself. The reasons were that this offered the opportunity to get closer to the interview situation once again bringing the author closer to the data material. The other reason was that the author understands High German as well as Swiss German, making the transcribing process quite efficient. For the transcription, software called F4 was used. This software helps to play and replay audio files efficiently. It was possible to transform the audio files into transcripts with only minor changes. As recordings and transcripts have to be 'natural' (Dittmar, 2002), only changes were made that had no influence on the content. This includes leaving out different sounds people produce like 'aaah', 'hmmmm' and cutting out stories interviewees told which have nothing to do with the research whatsoever. It needs to be mentioned that those transcripts were not again sent back to the interviewees for confirmation.

5.2.2.2 Using ATLAS.ti

The data analysis in this study was done through different basic activities which included transcribing, reading, creating a code list, coding, taking notes, detecting patterns and connections within the data, writing memos and finally writing up the findings into this report (see also Miles and Huberman, 1994). As Tesch describes it, the analysis of qualitative data consists of breaking it up into small pieces and putting it back together to create a bigger picture of the cases on a higher order of analysis (Tesch, 1990).

Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) has been used more and more since it was developed around twenty years ago. Most of the CAQDAS used today is based on the 'code and retrieve idea'. This simply means that the researcher can work

with a code list, code the documents and then retrieve the coded text segments. Of course this is not the only function offered by CAQDAS, however, it still is one of the most important ones (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As Bryman and Bell also put it, the software also “...takes over the physical tasks of writing marginal codes, making photocopies, of transcripts or field notes, cutting out all chunks of text relating to a code and pastes them together” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 445). However, this does not mean that the software itself does the work. CAQDAS is a tool that is used for the analysis. It cannot do any analysis by itself (Frieze, 2012).

This opens the question as to why CAQDAS was used for this study. The biggest advantages of using this software are speed and efficiency. When the code list is prepared, the coding itself can be done comparably quickly. The same applies for changing quotations, recordings and so on. This leads to a rather high flexibility (e.g. the code list can be changed within seconds). In comparison to simply reading through transcripts and taking notes, the usage of this software offers a more systematic analysis. Also, there is literally no limit in data volume (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Nevertheless, there are also limitations that need to be acknowledged when using CAQDAS. Some authors argue that by using this software, the closeness to the data may be lost and that coding via software may lead to a ‘quick and dirty’ data analysis (see e.g. Creswell, 2007). However, the closeness to the data is not lost, as the software itself does not do any analysis. The analysis still needs still to be done by the researcher. It is also the task of the author to ensure that an analysis is not ‘quick and dirty’. Learning how to use such software is time intensive and can therefore count as a disadvantage (Robson, 2011). In any way, with using CAQDAS, the analysis is done in a transparent way, which allows other interested researchers to clearly understand the steps of analysis, allowing it to be traced and possibly replicated (Silverman, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The predominant advantages of using CAQDAS for the analysis of qualitative data led to the decision to use such software for this study. The crucial factors therefore are the transparency along with the efficiency of the code and retrieve process. ATLAS.ti was chosen as the author was already familiar with the software and has had several years’ experience working with it. Also, the software was available through the author’s workplace.

Coding

For the analysis of the collected data material, the thematic quality approach in connection with the grounded theory was chosen. In his book *Real World Research*, Colin Robson (2011) describes this approach in detail. The thematic quality approach assumes that those parts from the transcripts, which the researcher identifies as being of potential interest, are coded. Coding is a process in which data (transcripts) is broken down into components and is given names. Those codes can be grouped into so-called themes (Robson, 2011). In this study, the word 'code' refers to such themes while more detailed information is named sub-code. For example a stakeholder group was identified, which is universities. 'Universities' is then referred to as a code, while for more detailed information on a specific university; a sub-code (e.g. 'University A') is used. Those codes and sub-codes can be determined in different ways. A basic code list was created based on the literature, which was considered during the literature review. This code list was then complemented by findings from the pilot study and the document analysis. Two lists of codes, one for the Swiss organisation, one for the German organisation were built up in order to meet the specific conditions of the individual organisation. Based on those two collections of codes (e.g. stakeholder, risks, benefits, etc.), the author created a first full list, which was then tested with the first transcripts of each organisation. For this, one interview was chosen which was assumed to contain the richest information. This allowed a good development of the drafted code list. During this development phase, codes were added, deleted, merged and renamed. It has to be mentioned that this phase took time, but the time invested in this phase allowed the researcher to have a developed and advanced code list, which was most beneficial when really getting started with the coding process (Merriam, 2009). This is explicitly not a linear process, but rather a process that goes in circles during which the two code lists are repeatedly changed and updated. To ensure the usefulness of the code lists, they were frequently checked to see if they allowed the coding of the essential data, which is needed to find answers to the research questions.

This code list was then developed even further during the actual coding period. Here, the author followed a grounded theory approach. Robson (2011) calls this a version of thematic coding where it is a principle that while going through the data material coding, some additional codes need to be created which arise from the data. Those

codes created while coding were based on the author's own interpretation of the patterns in the transcripts (Robson, 2011). Therefore, the author followed the idea to enrich the basic thematic quality approach with the grounded theory approach. These two code lists then served as the basis of the later interpretation of the data material. For a full overview on the two code lists including code definitions, please see Appendix D and Appendix E. A sample of such coded pages can be found in Appendix I.

Social Network Analysis

Here it should be mentioned that the author did originally not intend to do a social network analysis of the collected data. Through answering the first sub-research question therefore visualising the stakeholder networks for recruitment of the two organisations, the study did however touch qualitative aspects of the social network analysis. This was also the case when a first map was used in the interviews to use the power of visualisation to support the data collection within the interview-phase (for this see also Sitte & Konrad, 2014). As the focus of this study was to understand the relationships within the network in depth and use the visualisation only as assistance, a full social network analysis which could also use several quantitative data (e.g. for calculating in-degrees and out-degrees, geodesic distances, closeness and betweenness centrality) was not run (Stegbauer, 2010; Schönhuth, Gamper, Kronenwett & Stark, 2013)). However, this does not mean that a social network analysis cannot be used for research in that field. Further research, following a social network analysis approach from the very beginning is considered to be a valid option

5.2.2.3 Limitation of interview phase

Originally it was mentioned and described in the proposal that it is intended to conduct external interviews within the two organisations' stakeholder networks. The idea behind this was that this would have potentially provided the researcher with the opportunity to reflect on the perception of the organisations from the external view. It may also have contributed other perspectives and therefore discover additional risks, benefits and opportunities for recruitment.

However, it was not possible to stick to the intended plan and no external interviews have taken place. From the very beginning of the study, it was clear that contact with

external stakeholders of those organisations might only be initialised, if the heads of HR agreed. What the researcher was not able to expect from the beginning, was that the primarily interesting stakeholders are either competitors or customers. Those two categories of stakeholders demonstrate a highly sensitive component, as the relation to them is crucial for the success of the organisations. If it comes to the topic of recruitment, this is an even more sensitive matter. After discussing this situation with the supervisor as well as with the head of HR of the German organisation, it was decided that due to those research ethics reasons, external interviews would not be conducted in either of the two cases. Nevertheless, what was also not expected before conducting the study was that many of the interviewees were actually former employees of customers or competitors of their current employer. As the interview guide also covers their own recruitment process, it was possible to collect information from the perspectives of competitors and customers. Despite the lack of full external interviews, those perspectives add real value to the research and allow insights into several different competitors and customers. These results are also presented along with all the other interview findings in the following chapters.

5.3 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are important when it comes to establishing or assessing the quality of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Special attention needs to be paid on accuracy during the data collection and the analysis. Literature differentiates between internal and external validity and reliability. Internal validity is mainly connected with the questions “*Do the findings of the study make sense?*” and “*Are they credible to the people we study and our readers?*” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278) and also intends to find out if there is a good match between the observation of the researcher and the developed theoretical idea (Bryman & Bell, 2011). External validity, on the other hand, focuses on the need to find out “*... whether the conclusions of a study have any larger import*” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278) and if the findings can be transferred to another social setting. Are they transferable to other contexts? (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Internal reliability targets the question whether or not different researchers in one project agree upon what they see and hear during the data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2011). External reliability deals with the question of generalisability, meaning to which

degree this study can potentially be replicated (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Robson, 2011). Bryman and Bell point out that this is something that is difficult to meet in qualitative research, as it is not possible to freeze a specific social setting and its environment for another study.

In this study, several provisions were made to increase the validity as well as the reliability of the research undertaken. Merriam (2009) discusses strategies that promote the validity and the reliability of a study. Based on this discussion, the following provisions were made:

- Merriam (2009) suggests taking the data and interpretations back to the people from where they have originally been collected and ask them if they are plausible. This strategy was matched through two different provisions. On the one hand, the detailed findings of the main study were presented and discussed in detail with the two heads of HR of both organisations. Furthermore, a validation study was run to which all interviewees were invited (please see Chapter 6.5 for more details.)
- Also, Merriam (2009) suggests spending an adequate amount of time to collect the data so the data becomes 'saturated'. This was achieved through the interview phase, where interviews were conducted until no further new and valuable insights were gained.
- Merriam (2009) suggests discussing the process of the study and the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data material with colleagues. This was achieved through ongoing and regular discussions that took place among the scientific environment of the author and also between him and his supervisor.
- It is also suggested to provide a detailed account of the procedures, the methods and decision points of the study. This is truly provided with the text at hand where the method chapter presents and discusses those issues in detail. All interviews were recorded and transcribed and therefore showed many if not all details of the data collection process.
- It is also suggested to provide enough description to allow for conceptualising of the study. This should enable the reader to assess the extent to which the situation matches with the research context and therefore to assess the findings

could be transferred (Merriam, 2009). This point was matched through in-depth descriptions of the two cases and the collected data material, which can be found in Chapter 5.

Those provisions allowed a strong increase in the validity and reliability of the study.

5.4 Research ethics

Research ethics are an important issue in every kind of research. As Stake (2005) puts it:

“Qualitative researchers are guests in the private space of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (Stake, 2005, p. 459).

This quotation shows two different factors. On the one hand there is a code of ethics, a set of ethical issues that makes the researcher aware of limitations, potential danger and non-intended influences within a study. On the other hand, there is the researcher himself. As researchers normally come from a defined field of science, they have their own perspective on a project. This specific perspective may create a bias. Therefore, a reflection needs to take place on the researcher’s behaviour, the bias and what the influence of this may be (e.g. in an interview situation) (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The same applies to the motives of a researcher. Those motives need to be reflected on to allow a more objective execution of a study and therefore less influence (Cassell & Symon, 2012).

Ethical issues may be raised in any research study. Especially in qualitative research with its in-depth and unstructured nature, ethical issues have a particular resonance and are likely to emerge. This is likely to happen mainly during the data collection process and the dissemination of findings. Therefore, the relation between the researcher and the interviewees impacts how much the researcher can reveal with the data collected (Merriam, 2009; Ritchie & Lewis, 2011).

However, thinking about research ethics is not just to be done before conducting a study. Ethics needs to be paid attention to throughout the entire research process (Robson, 2011).

According to Patton (2002), the validity and reliability of a study depends to a high extent on the ethics of the researcher. He names the professional integrity of the researcher as essential as the reader of scientific work has to trust that the researcher has conducted the study with integrity (Patton, 2002). Despite the fact that several ethics policies and guidelines exist, it always comes down to the researcher as an individual and his or her sensitivity and values (Merriam, 2009)

Ethical issues checklist

Patton (2002) created a checklist on ethical issues for research (see Table 13 below). In the following, this list is used to reflect on the ethical issues that were faced during this study.

The Ethical Issues Checklist	
1.	Explaining purpose of the inquiry and methods used
2.	Promises and reciprocity
3.	Risk Assessment
4.	Confidentiality
5.	Informed consent
6.	Data access and ownership
7.	Interviewer mental health
8.	Advice
9.	Data collection boundaries
10.	Ethical versus legal conduct

Table 13: Ethical issues checklist ²¹

Patton's checklist recommends **explaining the purpose of the inquiry and methods** that are used during the study to the people involved. Within this study, several pre-meetings took place with the heads of HR of both the Swiss and the German organisations. During those meetings, the researcher offered full transparency of the study. Its focus and all foreseeable issues related to the data collection were discussed in depth. In addition, every single interviewee was informed in written form about the

²¹ According to Patton, 2002, p. 233.

study, its goals and methods before the actual interview took place. Nevertheless, at the beginning of all interviews, the cornerstones of the project were repeated and several questions of interviewees on all aspects of the data collection process were answered on this occasion.

When working together with organisations, being clear about the **promises and reciprocity** connected to the project is essential. This is especially important with organisations that are used to involving consultants in their business as they may overestimate the direct effect of the research and its findings. With both organisations, detailed conversations about those issues were held.

Risk assessment is not only an issue directed to the success of the study, but mainly on the people involved in the data collection process. Protecting the interviewees from any harm is one of the most central ethical issues (Ritchie & Lewis, 2011). That was a central issue in this study. Generally many HR projects involve sensitive data. Interviewing people about their own experiences with recruitment processes potentially involves the discussion of sensible or personal information, for example. Therefore, anonymity for the organisations themselves as well as for the involved employees was a prerequisite for the organisations to participate in the study. This means that the anonymity was a crucial aspect for this study. The researcher spent a high degree of effort in anonymising the collected data. However, this may not be enough. As Punch puts it: *“The cloak of anonymity for characters may not work with insiders who can easily locate the individuals concerned or, what is even worse, claim that they can recognise them when they are, in fact, wrong”* (Punch, 1994, p. 92). Therefore, the author has decided not only to hide the names of the two organisations but to also replace the names of the interviewees with simple abbreviations. It was also decided not to provide a detailed description of the organisations, as with this additional information there is the potential for them to be identified. An additional point to prevent harm from the participants was the decision during the data collection process to exclude the pre-planned interviews in the external stakeholder networks of the two organisations. Here the HR managers had great concerns that those interviews may have a negative impact on their sensible relationship with those stakeholders.²²

²² For more information, please see Chapter 5.1.2.

This goes hand in hand with **confidentiality** which is named by Patton as an important ethical issue (see also e.g. Ritchie & Lewis, 2011 or Robson, 2011). All confidentiality matters were discussed with the two HR managers before the study. With the German organisation, a confidentiality agreement was signed while the Swiss organisation considered a verbal agreement to be sufficient. Furthermore, the matter of confidentiality was discussed with every single interviewee before the start of the interview.

This also applies for **informed consent**. Full transparency on what the interviewees will face, how the research works and how the findings will be used was provided to the interviewees. As recommended by Ritchie and Lewis (2011) as well as Robson (2011), this was done throughout the beginning of the interviews. Not a single interviewee refused an interview. This was mainly the case as the interviewees were pre-informed about the interview content and the research project through their HR manager and an email from the researcher.

The **data access and ownership** was picked out as a central term within the confidentiality agreement with the German organisation and the verbal agreement with the Swiss organisation. Access to some personalised data was denied, but anonymised data access was generously granted by both organisations.

An ethical issue related to the **mental health of the interviewer**, who is the researcher in this case, was not detected. In point 8, Patton raises attention on advice. It can be necessary to have somebody to talk to when a researcher sees an ethical issue emerging. In this project, that was the case when the first data analysis showed that the most interesting external stakeholders to be interviewed are the most sensitive ones (competitors and customers). The researcher asked for **advice** on that from his supervisor who was always open for such questions. This is directly connected to the data collection boundaries, which came along with that issue. Although in the written agreement it was mentioned that external interviews might need to be conducted via the HR manager, certain flexibility due to the obvious ethical issues on this had to be shown. Finally, Patton mentions the **ethical versus legal conduct**. However, no legal conduct was detected throughout the research process of this project.

Data collection

Going through such a checklist is only one way to consider ethical issues. A procedural perspective on the data collection process offers an alternative to this. Therefore, looking quickly at the document analysis, the interview phase and dissemination may be beneficial.

From the perspective of ethical issues, documents are generally less problematic. Here, publically available data is often in aggregated or anonymous form. Internal documents, however, can contain sensible and also ethically relevant information. An example would be personal records that may provide such sensible information (Merriam, 2009). However, such information was not collected and information that had the potential to cause an ethical issue was either not handed over or was ignored by the researcher.

In contrast to documents, interviews are a minefield for ethical issues. Although all the previously named factors are considered as with risk assessment, confidentiality, anonymity or informed consent, delicate situations can still occur during the interview. There is the danger that interviewees may feel that their private space is being invaded or they may feel personally embarrassed when certain questions are asked. This may also create pressure and lead to answers on issues that they otherwise would not have wanted to provide (Merriam, 2009). The researcher always had this in mind when conducting interviews within the two organisations. Also, the researcher has several years of experience doing qualitative interviews, which was of great help in detecting potential ethical issues. After the first three interviews, a full reflection took place. However, no ethical issue was detected. Throughout all interviews, the interviewees were all pre-informed, accepted the recording and even answers with quite sensitive or personal information were provided. Ultimately, it can be said that in terms of ethical issues, the interviews went without any noteworthy incidents.

Last but not least, the dissemination should also quickly be looked at (Remenyi, Williams, Money & Swartz, 2002). For this, it needs to be mentioned that no third party sponsored the research project. The connected scholarship provided by the researcher's employer was not connected to any requirements, which may have caused an ethical issue.

5.5 Limitations of methodology

The limitations, as well as the different strengths of research methodologies, have been investigated and discussed in various previous studies (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Robson, 2011). Those existing limitations have been matched by choosing a methodology which is not only fitting well into investigating the research questions, but which has already proven its usefulness by several other studies in the same field. This was important here, as the investigation into complex stakeholder networks needed to be based on a tested and reliable methodology that would allow for the chance to collect the detailed data needed.

Nevertheless, it also needs to be mentioned that the chosen multiple-case study approach with two very different cases from different countries, industries and size leads to a limitation in regard to generalisability. However, the lack of research done in the area of stakeholder management in human resource management and the required depth of the investigation justifies such a frame. Also, there may exist a limitation in regard to the sampling of the two organisations and with the sampling of the interview partners within those organisations.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter offered detailed information on the entire data collection and analysis process. The collection of documents as well as interview data along with in-depth descriptions of the process and the circumstances allows a high degree of transparency. This contributes strongly to the replicability of the study, although this is nevertheless difficult as discussed in the validity and reliability section of this chapter.

Furthermore, this chapter provided a full description and discussion of the data analysis, the creation and development of the used code list and explained the role and importance of the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software used for this study. In addition, this chapter also described the issues faced regarding research ethics and the provisions undertaken to face those challenges. It closed with some remarks on the limitations of the whole study.

6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the major findings of the study on the two organisations. In the first sub-chapter, the individual findings from the two organisations are presented. This is followed by the presentation of the answers to the research questions and a consideration of the issues from the conceptual framework created in the literature review. After this, further research findings are discussed and the validation study presented.

6.1 Results of the document and interview analysis

In this first sub-chapter, the findings of the document analysis, combined with the findings of the interview phase are presented and discussed. In the following second sub-chapter, those findings form the basis to present the results from the stakeholder network analysis of the two cases.

6.1.1 The two organisations

The findings that are presented in this sub-chapter are based on the analysed internal and external documents that were either searched for independently or were provided by the HR managers of the organisations. The findings in this chapter are presented in the following order. At the beginning, some general information about each individual organisation is provided which is followed by some details about the development and recent growth. Thereafter, the recruitment of each organisation and the typical processes are described. This also includes more detailed information on the various recruitment activities and other factors that contribute to the recruitment performance. Furthermore, some information about the current staff is presented.

6.1.1.1 Characteristics of the two organisations

Both of the organisations under investigation are not named in this project. To ensure anonymity, some of the information on those organisations is formulated more

generally to minimise the chance that somebody could identify the organisations through the provided details.²³

The German organisation

The German organisation investigated in this study is active in the German banking and insurance industry. It provides various consulting as well as research and development services. The organisation is in private hands, and since its foundation, has been family-owned. The main field of expertise of this organisation is in consulting with a focus on information and communication technology (ICT). As the organisation is an SME, it is in constant competition with the big players in the consulting market, not only for business, but also for employees.

Since the German organisation was founded, a constant growth not only in revenue but also in the amount of employees has registered. This went along with the opening of several new branches in different metropolises within Germany that required constant recruitment efforts. Every couple of years the organisation was assigned to develop new products for customers, which always led to major recruitment efforts, especially for the R&D department in charge of the product development. Today, the organisation employs almost 400 people in four major German metropolises. However, as many of the employees are involved in consulting, people work all over the country and occasionally internationally. Therefore, the assignment to a certain branch is sometimes only a formal act, as many employees work directly with the customers in their facilities and as well in home offices.

The Swiss organisation

The Swiss organisation works on behalf of the Swiss federation and is a non-profit organisation engaged in the health industry. As the organisation is financed not only by the federal administration, it needs to justify its work to other stakeholders. An essential part of its mission is to work closely with several NGOs, cantonal and federal organisations and with each of their three main business units. Therefore, it can be said that the mission or core task of the organisation is to work closely with its stakeholders

²³ Further information on this is detailed out in Chapter 5.4, where anonymity as part of the research ethics is explained further.

making awareness and co-operation an essential part of the work and also the right to exist. However, this does also mean that the organisation is highly exposed in the Swiss health industry.

During the last ten years, the Swiss organisation went through a major reorganisation along with major changes in management. Those changes also led to fundamental changes among the employees. High turnover during the change process was detected. For the last four to five years, the restructuring was finalised and new fields of activity have developed. This led to a small, but constant growth of the organisation, which can also be seen with the amount of employees. Today the organisation employs about 50 people at two branches.

6.1.1.2 Recruitment activities and processes

The German organisation

The HR department is a central function within the German organisation. This is however not fully reflected in the organisational structure. The organisation has decided to have a rather small HR department and to involve the line managers highly in the HR tasks. This means that the head of HR is mainly responsible for the employer branding, recruitment and also HR development. Administrative tasks like the creation of contracts, payroll and vacation registration are in the hands of two assistants. In addition, a secretary takes care of the application management that includes the main correspondence with applicants and making appointments for interviews. For other additional tasks, like for example the management and maintenance of the Facebook page, line managers or further employees are in charge.

Recruitment activities and success

The amount of vacancies has varied during the process of the document analysis. The following anonymised Figure 6 shows a list of job posts from the organisation's website. In order to keep the anonymity of the organisation, the specific job postings were replaced by a placeholder (e.g. 'Field A').

<p>Current Vacancies</p> <p>for Graduates and Young Professionals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Junior Consultants A ▪ Interns Research ▪ Software Engineers / IT Consultants in Field A ▪ Software Engineers / IT Consultants in Field B ▪ Software-Testing-Engineers <p>for experienced Professionals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultants/Senior Consultants Field A ▪ Senior Consultant Field B ▪ Senior Consultant Field C ▪ Senior Consultant Field D ▪ Senior Consultant Field E ▪ Senior Consultant/Managing Consultant Field B ▪ Senior Consultant/Managing Consultant Field E ▪ Senior Consultants/Managing Consultants Field D ▪ Managing Consultant Field F ▪ Managing Consultant Field G ▪ Managing Consultant Field H

Figure 6: Anonymised job posts from the German organisation's website²⁴

This figure makes it quite clear that the demand for new employees is rather high; especially as 6 out of these 16 job posts are written in plural. Throughout the year, the German organisation has about 30 vacancies to be filled. This is balanced with an equal amount of recruited new employees. However, the time that is needed to fill a vacancy varies heavily.

Overall, it can be said that the degree of recruitment activities of the German organisation is comparably high, especially when taking into consideration the size of the organisation. In the following, all recruitment activities are presented and explained one after the other. To provide a first overview, the following Table 14 was created from the German organisation's internal HR Management Software. It shows the breakdown of the applications received by the organisation between 2008 and 2013 by the related recruitment activity.

²⁴ Example from November 2013.

Applications since 2008	
Online Job Posts	43.6%
External Recruiter / Head hunter	21.9%
Own Website	8.9%
Initiative	8.7%
Career Fair at Universities	8.3%
Referrals	5.5%
Events at Universities	1.2%
Publications	0.8%
Job Posts Print	0.7%
Internship / Theses	0.3%
Xing	0.0%
	100.0%

Table 14: German organisation – applications between 2008 and 2013, shares by recruitment activity

It needs to be mentioned that this data is based on the condition that the applicant mentioned the channel he or she was recruited through or was attracted attention by. Slightly less than half of the applicants provided this information during the recruitment process. This table already provides an insight into the variety of recruitment activities that are run by the German organisation. Those will be explained further individually in the following.

Job posts

It is not a surprise that the German organisation uses online job posts intensively. Here they rely mostly on the two main providers in Germany which are Stepstone and Monster. For the publishing of job posts, both providers offer good opportunities. Nevertheless, the organisation actively changes the platforms once in a while. As the amount of job posts with around 10–20 is comparably high, a frame contract was negotiated with the platforms that allows them a certain number of job posts to be online throughout a full year. Some of the job posts with those online platforms are not put in and out frequently, but stay there for several months. This is due to the fact that there is a constant need for several positions like consultants and senior consultants.

Besides using the service of those two major job platforms, the German organisation also makes use of its own website to publish job posts. The amount of job posts here is always higher, as several positions, e.g. for interns, students and admin staff, are

normally not published on the rather expensive online platforms. During the document analysis period, around 20 job posts were published on the website of the organisation (please see again Figure 6).

External recruiter / head hunter

As can often be observed in challenging labour markets, the service of external help is often unpreventable. For this organisation, especially the recruitment of senior consultants and managing consultants who bring their own networks is a challenging task. Therefore, services from external recruiters or head hunters are frequently used. Here we can differentiate the two natures of services. One service is provided by external recruiters who either regularly or situationally propose a potential candidate for a vacancy to the organisation. The other service is used if the organisation has itself detected a potential candidate, but cannot or does not want to get directly in touch. This may be the case if this person works for a competitor, or even more sensitive, if the person works for one of the organisation's customers. Therefore, services from head hunting or executive search organisations are used. The following Table 15 shows the extent of co-operation with external recruiters or head hunters of the German organisation for the year 2012.

	Head hunter	Applications	Hires
1	Head hunter A	1	0
2	Head hunter B	1	0
3	Head hunter C	8	0
4	Head hunter D	3	0
5	Head hunter E	2	0
6	Head hunter F	7	0
7	Head hunter G	1	0
8	Head hunter H	1	0
9	Head hunter I	16	0
10	Head hunter J	11	2
11	Head hunter K	1	0
12	Head hunter L	4	0
13	Head hunter M	21	4
14	Head hunter N	2	0
15	Head hunter O	8	2
16	Head hunter P	2	0

Table 15: German organisation – co-operation with external recruiters or head hunters in 2012

As can be seen in the table, in 2012 15 different companies who proposed between 1 and 21 candidates to the German organisation provided external recruiting services. From the overall 89 applications, 65 candidates were refused, 11 withdrew their application and 8 were finally hired. All of those eight new employees were recruited into more senior positions. Therefore, it can be stated that the contribution to recruitment success through this activity is rather high. However, this also needs to be seen in the context of costs. As external recruiters or head hunters are paid on the basis of a commission that is calculated as a percentage of the candidate's annual salary, those commissions are quite high. As a result it can be stated that this recruitment activity is currently important, but is also too expensive to be much extended.

Career fairs at universities

Career fairs play an important role for the German organisation. Every year they participate in around 16 different events of that kind with different universities. Those universities are mainly located close by or near one of their branches, giving them the chance to recruit local people for their local branch. Among those university career fairs two different kinds can be differentiated. One is a traditional fair that includes a stand, handing out flyers and having chats with students. The other one could be called a qualified university event. Here the organisation has the opportunity to read students' CVs ahead of time and can schedule 45-minute interviews. This makes such fairs a rather efficient event with the opportunity to get to know potential new candidates who were already pre-selected. About 6–8 of those 16 annual university events the organisation attends are of that kind. All in all this recruitment activity is quite successful. It does not only help the organisation to recruit new employees, but it is also a chance to present the organisation to a wider audience and therefore strengthen the organisation's brand as an employer. This is especially important as nearly all of its big competitors are dominantly represented at those career fairs.

Events at and co-operations with universities and institutes

Besides attending those university career fairs, there are also other strong co-operations with several universities throughout the country. Those co-operations range from simple engagements where the German organisation offers student projects up to official contracted partnerships. The organisation is highly involved in offering student projects where they provide students the opportunity to work on a topic within their

organisation. This ranges from semester papers to bachelor and master theses, where they also offer supervision. Also, various employees of the German organisation offer speeches and sometimes even guest lectures. Besides that, the German organisation provides scholarships for students at two universities. The most advanced co-operation between the organisation and a university is the premium partnership with a northern German university where they sponsor and support a master program in the field of management and consulting in information technology. All of these university co-operations have been built up during the last few decades and have proven to be a valuable recruitment activity.

Referrals

The usage of employees to find good candidates for their own organisation is an important activity for this organisation. Referrals are made frequently, leading to a sound recruitment success. There is also an internal reward system where financial rewards are paid to employees who have successfully conveyed a new employee. However, the employees of the German organisation do not make enough use of this and do not yet see themselves in the function of a recruiter for the organisation. This is something the HR department has been trying to change over the past several years.

Social media

Social media plays a strong role among the recruitment activities of the organisation. The basis was set when the organisation decided to open a Xing account²⁵ to start not only looking for potential candidates through that platform, but to mainly stay in contact with former employees. The platform is in regular use, but needs to build up and grow to allow stronger direct recruitment success. In 2012, the organisation also started a Facebook account. Here the intention was not so much to use it as a tool to directly recruit new employees. The idea was mainly to provide the wider public with an insight into what it is like working for this organisation. However, this has the potential to contribute to the employer branding strategy and therefore indirectly support the recruitment success. The German organisation also has an account on Kununu. This platform allows employees, former employees and even applicants to evaluate an organisation through several criteria. This allows a new insight into organisations for

²⁵ Comparable to the English LinkedIn platform.

potential candidates and therefore may have an impact on the amount of people who decide to apply for a job at this organisation or not. The German organisation scores very high on this platform with 4.5 points out of 5 of what makes them a so-called “Kununu Top Company”. Nevertheless, the real impact of this platform on recruitment success is hard to evaluate. However, it may contribute to the reputation of the organisation especially as an employer.

Awards

Due to the analysis of external documents, one of the most outstanding indirect recruitment activities is the engagement with different auditing organisations to win awards. The German organisation proves its commitment to providing good working conditions to their employees through participation in such competitions. During the last few years, the organisation was repeatedly awarded the “Great Place to Work” award as one of the country’s best employers in its field. Furthermore, it won several regional employer awards in the areas where it has branches. Besides those general awards, it also won national awards for its family and employee oriented work environment. Those awards led to an increased public visibility and may have a direct relation to the amount of applications that are received for its vacancies. Therefore, a strong impact on the recruitment success through those awards can be assumed.

Recruitment success

All the described recruitment activities feed into the recruitment success. This can be measured in different ways. One way is to look at the amount of applications that are received per vacancy. Another way is to assess the quality of the applications received. Putting those two quantitative and qualitative factors together may give us an impression of the actual success. The German organisation receives around 100 applications per month altogether. According to internal statistics, slightly more than 50 per cent of those applications are of adequate quality to be distributed further internally for a closer inspection. The following Table 16 gives an overview on the actual amount of applications that were received in the years 2008 to 2013.

Amount of applications per job post

	Job Posts	Applications	Applications per post
Consulting (all levels)	33	1387	42
R&D (all levels)	7	498	71
Testing (all levels)	4	320	80
Others (all levels)	28	1153	41

Table 16: German organisation – applications per job post

Table 16 is divided into the different function levels. Per job post an average amount of approximately 40 applications is received for jobs in consulting. In the field of research and development, the organisation receives an average of about 70 applications while for software testing an average of 80 is achieved. Ultimately, it can be stated that at the time of the document analysis the recruiting was comparably successful. However, this is only an indicator. Furthermore, it needs to be considered how much time is needed to fill a vacancy and what the recruitment success is in comparison to comparable competitors which face similar environmental conditions.

The recruitment process

The recruitment process within the German organisation involves the line or department managers to a great extent. When they see the need for additional staff, they are responsible for announcing their need to the HR department, updating or creating a job description and co-ordinating the job post with the head of HR. The business unit managers partly have the budget to contract an external recruiter or head hunter themselves. When applications are received, the internal selection process is initiated. When the incoming applications are pre-selected, they are spread internally to the line managers who require a person with the profile of the applicant. The line managers then have three days to decide if they would like to have an interview with this person or not. Nearly 40 per cent of the CVs that are spread internally lead to an interview invitation. Those interviews are then organised by the secretary of the HR department and take place with the relevant line managers and also sometimes with the HR manager. In the second round of interviews, the decision to hire a person is almost made. In this second

round there is always a member of the management board present. Only candidates for a management position go for a third interview. This third interview may then lead to the offer of a contract. As soon as the contract is signed, the preparation for the welcome week and the assignment of an internal godfather for the new employee is organised.

Current employees

During the period of the document analysis process, the German organisation employed nearly 400 people. As the organisation is comparably young, the majority of the staff is younger than 45 years. This is also the result of the successful recruitment of graduates. Furthermore, the organisation is quite successful in retaining its employees. Until several years ago, the turnover of staff was as small as 2 per cent. Just recently, the annual turnover increased to 5 or 6 per cent. However, this is mainly true for the consulting area, where turnover is naturally higher than in other areas. In addition to this, it may also be interesting to mention that this low turnover rate results in a workforce that on average stays for more than ten years with the organisation.

The Swiss organisation

The HRM in this organisation is not considered to be an important function. The consequence is that the head of HR is also the assistant to the Managing Director, meaning that there is not a single person in the organisation who works 100 per cent in an HR function. Some of the typical HR work is distributed among several people in the organisation. This means, for example, that the receptionists take care of some of the official correspondence. For the recruitment process, an external person is contracted to help with interviewing and shortlisting candidates. On top of this, the organisation enforces its managers to contribute significantly to the HR tasks. This means that tasks like updating job descriptions, creating job posts, selecting interview candidates and suchlike are mainly carried out by the respective managers or team leaders.

Recruitment activities

During the time of the document analysis, the organisation always had only one vacancy. The average time the organisation needs to fill a vacancy is approximately three months, while also about every three months one new vacancy needs to be filled. Overall, it can be said that the recruitment activities of the Swiss organisation are quite

limited in number and investment. The organisation is not involved in any campus recruitment activities. This is due to the fact that the organisation normally does not hire graduates directly from the universities for its vacancies. Besides that, the organisation receives multiple applications from graduates every month without any effort. The organisation has also never participated in a career fair of any kind.

Most of the recruitment activities of the organisation are connected to simple job posts. Of course job posts are published on its own website. However, it also publishes its job posts on the two major Swiss career websites. Only two job categories are published differently. This is on the one hand the position of the director and the vice director and on the other hand assistant positions. Vacancies for assistant positions are normally not published as the organisation has a constant flow of incoming applications. This means that if such an assistant position becomes vacant, the recently received applications are mostly enough to find proper candidates.

In addition, the organisation is able to publish its job posts on co-operative websites, which are maintained by the organisation and several partners and connected to common projects.

Social media is not an issue for the recruitment of the Swiss organisation, so platforms like LinkedIn, Xing or Facebook are not used at all. This is mainly due to the fact that additional benefits from the usage of those channels are not expected. For the moment no additional efforts are needed as the organisation finds the people it needs.

The recruitment process

The Swiss organisation has a documented official recruitment process. This process goes through three major phases: defining the goal, aiming and scoring. First, the goal for the recruitment is defined. This is done by the creation of a job description. Then the requirements for this job are put together. Those requirements include several personal and educational criteria that are necessary to be successful on that specific position. Afterwards, the search is planned. The incoming applications are then either screened by the team leader or by a contracted external consulting company. The selected candidates are then invited to an interview for which an interview guide is used. These interviews take place with the team leader and the HR manager. In the next step, the

candidate's references are verified. The final interview is more of a presentation where the candidate then talks to the unit manager as well as the HR manager and the General Director. In the third phase, the candidate and the organisation sign the contract. Then the decision is communicated and the integration of the new employee can start.

Current employees

At the time the documents were analysed, nearly 50 people were working in the Swiss organisation. This has to be understood as a headcount, because the organisation offers the majority of its jobs as part-time jobs. Even full-time jobs are often offered as 80-100 per cent, so the person can decide on the degree of employment. However, this means that there is a gap between the headcount and the amount of full-time equivalents. For the following descriptions, the headcount is used as a basis.

One of the most interesting things to look up in the provided documents is to find out where the employees come from, meaning where they were employed previously. This can give us a first impression on the recruitment network by showing where the current employees were sourced. The following Table 17 shows a full list of former employers and additionally shows how many of the current employees worked for them before they joined the Swiss organisation. This list is simplified and different individual former employers are bundled into categories.

	Former Employers
8	Corporate World
6	Universities
5	Consulting
5	NGOs
4	Federal Administration
4	State Administration
3	Customers
2	Association (in health)
2	Education
2	Hospitals
2	Insurance
1	National Non-profit organisation
1	Retirement home
2	Others

Table 17: Swiss organisation – former employers of staff

This list of previous employers is somewhat diverse, covering for-profit, not-for-profit, private and public organisations. However, especially as the Swiss organisation is an NGO, it is interesting to learn that comparably many of the current employees have previously worked in the corporate world or at a profit-oriented organisation in the same industry. Also, it sticks out that different universities as well as other education providers account for nearly one quarter of the former employers. This information forms a good basis for the interview phase. It can be stated that the interviewees formerly worked for several of the above-mentioned employers.

After knowing who the former employers are, it is interesting to see how long the current employees have already been with the company (Table 18).

Years with the organisation	Amount of people
13	1
10	2
9	1
8	1
7	4
6	6
5	8
4	3
3	3
2	4
1	12

Table 18: Swiss organisation – staff retention

What clearly sticks out is that only a few people were there for more than nine years. This is mainly because the organisation is not very old yet and the amount of employees at the beginning was much lower. The majority of the employees have been with the Swiss organisation for less than nine years. Since the previously named restructuring of the organisation, many people have left the organisation. This came to a stop about seven years ago, when many new employees were hired to fill the vacancies and build on the growth of the organisation. Lately, a comparably high number of new employees have joined the company, which can be explained by the success in a new field of activity.

Summary

After analysing the findings, it becomes clear that the German organisation is highly engaged in recruitment activities. It manages its recruiting channels in many ways and maintains and extends co-operations with multiple stakeholders. Nevertheless, the findings also show the limitations of the current activities, as there are not many additional alternatives left and resources in terms of HR staff as well as financial resources are limited. It can already be assumed that based on this document data, that the complexity of the stakeholder network is rather high.

Also for the Swiss organisation the analyses of the documents led to a better understanding of the organisation's recruitment situation and its recruitment processes. It also gave insight into the current challenges and degree of involvement of the employees, the line managers and the HR managers. It can already be said that the awareness of the Swiss organisation of its stakeholder network is very high. Besides the simple awareness, the organisation also actively manages its network in everyday business life. Already first hints on the usage of this network for the recruitment of new employees have been discovered, but needed to be investigated deeper during the interview phase and the connected stakeholder network analysis.

6.1.2 Stakeholder network analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to show and discuss the findings from the interviews with the German and the Swiss organisation that have taken place as described in chapter 5.1.2. This chapter presents the full richness of the collected data from the interviews, also by using quotations to provide the reader with the valuably closeness to the data. In this chapter firstly there is a description and analysis of the two individual organisation's stakeholder networks for recruitment. This forms the basis to add information also collected in the interviews on the actual relations to the individual stakeholders. All this information is then brought together and visualised in a stakeholder map in the following chapter which shows the full complexity of the German and the Swiss organisation's stakeholder network for recruitment. Those results build the basis to address the first research sub-question which is then also presented in the next chapter.

6.1.2.1 The German organisation

This sub-chapter presents the findings from the German organisation in regards to the stakeholder network in which the organisation is embedded. Furthermore, it presents and discusses the findings from the interview phase on the assessment of those relations to the individual stakeholders in several dimensions and shows potentials for future developments.

List of stakeholders

The code list that was used to analyse the interviews with the ATLAS.ti software was built using the results of the document analysis. During the coding process, this code list was largely expanded and grounded on the information provided by the interviewees. This led to an advanced list of stakeholders that are grounded in the interview material. From the ATLAS.ti hermeneutic unit, a so-called Codes-Primary Documents Table can be extracted (see Appendix D and Appendix E). It not only shows the full list of stakeholders, but also shows how often those stakeholders were mentioned in the individual interviews. The numbers provided in this table should not be overestimated, but they give us an idea as to how well information of those stakeholders is grounded in our data (Frieze, 2012).

From this table, extensive information about the stakeholders can already be extracted. It lists 53 stakeholders, which were named at least once during the interviews. Those stakeholders can be categorised. It was decided to create the categories Competitors, Events, Employees, Media and Universities. It has to be mentioned that some of the listed stakeholders here are not typical ones. This is especially true for events. Here events are seen as platforms, which have proven to be of major importance to recruitment activities. Therefore, those events, represented by the responsible host (e.g. a university or a professional event agency) are seen alongside the other stakeholders who are important for the recruitment of the organisation.

It is advisable to not only look at this long list of stakeholders which were mentioned during the interviews, but to also concentrate this list in order to get a better overview on those stakeholders which seemed to be most present among the interviewees. The

following Table 19 shows such a shortlist. For this table, some of the stakeholders were combined (marked as such in the table).

Stakeholders	Interview										TOTALS
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
SH_Competitors (combined)	1	0	7	2	9	2	7	3	3	3	37
SH_Customers	2	2	0	0	2	2	5	3	5	1	22
SH_Headhunter	1	4	1	0	2	1	2	1	0	0	12
SH_Internal_Employees (combined)	0	1	2	0	1	1	3	2	5	1	16
SH_Internal_Employees_Alumni Network	1	0	3	6	1	3	2	4	1	2	23
SH_Internal_Website	2	0	4	2	0	4	1	2	0	2	17
SH_Media_Awards (combined)	0	1	4	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	12
SH_Media_general (combined)	7	3	13	5	6	1	2	9	6	7	59
SH_Universities / Students	0	1	0	6	5	10	5	3	1	1	32
SH_Universities_(combined)	0	1	11	5	7	6	0	7	2	4	43
SH_University_Events (general)	2	3	10	1	6	1	4	4	4	2	37

Table 19: German organisation, codes – primary documents table of the stakeholders – shortlist

Table 19 shows the first surprise arising from the interview phase when combining with the results from the document analysis. Nearly every interviewee mentioned the competitors of the German organisation and its customers. Also, most of the interviewees mentioned head hunters during the interviews, which hints at the importance of those stakeholders within the organisation's current recruitment situation. To no surprise, the organisation's own employees are also seen as stakeholders in recruitment activities. The high groundedness of the different media stakeholders in the data is also a clear sign of its high awareness among the interviewees. As could have already been assumed from the results of the document analysis, the awareness of the interviewees is very high for the stakeholders from the side of universities, be it students, different institutions or university events.

However, all this only provides a first taste. In the following sub-chapter, all of the listed stakeholders will be described individually and the links between them will be shown and assessed. This will allow us later to draw a stakeholder map of the German organisation, which intends to include all the major players in the recruitment activities.

Assessing the relations

In this sub-chapter, most of the information on the stakeholders mentioned by the interviewees is presented. Some of the stakeholders are left out due to their minimal

importance. Those stakeholders are the Employment Bureau and the Family Service Agency, who only play a minor assisting role for recruitment activities of the organisation.

The interviewees did the assessment of the stakeholders during the interviews. Following the interview guide, many stakeholders were discussed and for most of them, assessments by the interviewees were provided. It needs to be mentioned that those judgements may be biased and partly subjective. However, the comfortable atmosphere and the very open, constructive and also critical view of the interviewees helped to get a good picture on those stakeholder relationships for recruitment. The assessments were retrieved through several codes by the ATLAS.ti software in the categories of importance, co-operation and influence.

Generally, it can be said that the German organisation mostly maintains a good and productive relationship with an adequate level of influence with its stakeholders relevant for recruitment. Only with a very few relationships was there no influence whatsoever. This is true for some of the social media stakeholders like the employer rating platform Kununu. Many of the stakeholder relations also have a business character, for example the co-operation with head hunters or the participation in professional career fairs. With the other co-operations that are more based on voluntariness like the university co-operations, there is also a comparably high degree of influence that is rather beneficial for adjusting them for recruitment activities and recruitment success. This may only provide a first insight. In the following sub-chapter, all relevant stakeholders are described and assessed individually providing a high degree of depth and insight into those relationships.

Employees and their networks

Employees play an important role for the recruitment activities of the German organisation. Basically, employees are interesting in four different ways. First of all, employees are a great source for referrals. This means that employees themselves can build up contacts to potential new employees involving them directly into recruitment activities. Also, those referrals are mainly of high quality.

Interviewees see referrals clearly as an important recruitment activity, which is also quite inexpensive. One interviewee mentioned:

“...referrals should really not be underestimated. It has really a different value if I know somebody and then decide that this person would fit to us and recommend him that. You know, I would never recommend somebody I like, to enter a sinking ship.”²⁶ (16:29)

Furthermore, employees are essential when it comes to spreading the word of the organisation being a good employer. As one interviewee states:

“Of course our employees are crucial for our image as an employer. I have recently heard from different directions that employees from other companies similar to ours, with whom we work together in projects, say that they totally liked the competencies that our employees have shown and the way they work together and treat each other and the customers.” (11:19)

This demonstrates the link of the employees not only to the customers, but also to employees from other organisations, in this case competitors. Also, interviewees see the multiple opportunities they have to get to know people and therefore meet potential new candidates for their own organisation.

Some of the interviewees were recruited through such referrals themselves, which highlights the importance of this recruitment channel. However, referrals rely on the personal networks of the employees to a great extent. Those can be professional networks built up as early as during university times, but also built up later during the professional career. Those personal networks also include relations of a private nature, for example with family and friends. When we talk about employees as stakeholders we have to imagine that we are not only talking about the employee as a person, but also as a manager of a network which bears potential for the recruitment success of the organisation. Several of the younger interviewees mentioned that they reactively or even actively engage their networks from university to promote working with the German organisation. Some of them mention that they could indeed promote the German

²⁶ All quotations are translated from German. The number refers to the quotation number in ATLAS.ti.

organisation more, but have never really thought about that in detail. One of them stated:

“Of course I can advertise my employer like crazy. I could run around everywhere and tell the people that I work at a good company and also do this intentionally in my circle of friends. Most of them don’t really know where I work and what I do (...) but I could do this much more target oriented and more positively.” (18:25)

Besides using this personal network, employees also see their own role during daily work as a chance to support recruitment. Most of them do not yet understand that if they are with the customers, competitors or with other stakeholders, they represent their company not only as employees, but also as ambassadors. As ambassadors we see here the passive recruiter, somebody who represents the German organisation, and at the same time spreads positive words about it as an employer. This is often seen in connection with the organisation’s multiple university co-operations. Here employees give lectures, speeches, offer projects, internships and more.

One of the interviewees stated:

“I did a student project where the German organisation offered a project. Although I worked at another project, I have seen the employees from the German organisation several times. They made a good impression on me, what was an additional argument for me to apply for a job there” (13:27)

Universities are only one kind of stakeholder where employees may be perceived as ambassadors of their employers. Others are seminars, conferences and trainings where employees of the German organisations are frequently present. However, getting into this role as an ambassador, or a recruiter is not yet realised by most of the interviewees. One of the interviewees brings this to the point:

“I would love to act as an ambassador. Until now I only go there (seminars), to learn something and to get to know potential business partners and customers. I have to start seeing this from a different perspective and therefore realise that this may also be the place to get to know people with whom I could imagine

working together in my company. To be perfectly honest, I have not thought about this yet.” (16:38)

Customers

As the interviewees already highlighted, the connection to the stakeholder customers is quite a special and complex one. As a matter of fact, many of the German organisation’s employees, especially the consultants, spent most of their working time with customers at their facilities. This close contact brings several interesting aspects for the recruitment of the organisation. As is not unusual in the consulting business, customers are often interested in recruiting external consultants. This is of course a danger for the German organisation. As one of the interviewees stated it:

“In consulting the turnover is the highest within our company. The colleagues are of course working with our customers. They are then approached by those companies and head hunters and so they are headhunted, also because they do not have such a close connection to us as they are not often in our own company’s offices, but with the customers.” (10:14)

However, this also works the other way around. Many of the interviewed employees see customers as a great stakeholder to look out for new candidates. The advantage is that employees of customers learn about how the German organisation works, how the colleagues treat and interact with each other and therefore can get a good impression about how it is working for them. Several interviewees mentioned that they have heard or experienced that their customers have recommended the German organisation as an interesting employer to people in their network. Insurance companies and banks are seen as an especially good opportunity to find potential candidates.

As a matter of fact, many of the German organisation’s employees were previously working for one of their customers. This is also true for some of the interviewees. Interestingly they were recruited in different ways. Two of them had simply learned about the German organisation at work and then applied for a job there. Another was actively approached by an employee of the German organisation and was recommended to apply.

Essentially, working together with customers also creates some kind of a recruiting platform. Consultants get a good insight into those organisations and may also detect good people who are unsatisfied with their current jobs. One interviewee stated:

“I have heard that about this one customer. Their employees are not really happy. They intend to lay off many of them and this tells me, it could be a chance to find good candidates for us.” (15:15)

It has also become clear that the stakeholder customer is very delicate in regards to recruitment activities. The two organisations have formed a professional relationship with regards to doing business and build up trust on that basis. This may be endangered through active recruitment.

Most of the interviewees agree that customers are a great source for potential new employees, but also point out the sensitive relation, which may be endangered following contracts and destabilise the professional relationship.

Competitors

Besides customers, competitors are also frequently mentioned in the interviews. The interviewees refer either to individual competitors or simply to competitors in general. Detailed information on individual competitors is however not focused on here. Mainly when referring to competitors, the interviewees talk about the big players in the German consulting market.

It is a daily situation that consultants work with customers at their site where also consultants from competitors are working. This is of course an interesting situation. Not only is the competitive situation very transparent, but also potential recruitment activities may be initiated through that. One interviewee described the situation as follows:

“Especially with bigger clients there are also other consultants involved in the projects we work at. Sometimes you even have to share an office. (...) Of course there is also rivalry between the consultants, but you also get the opportunity to meet other people who may be interesting candidates for our organisation.” (17:20)

Recruiting consultants from competitors is indeed seen as a good opportunity. Nevertheless, it is not seen as an easy thing and the sensitivity of recruiting directly from competitors is present in several of the interviewees. However, this recruitment channel has proven its effectiveness. Several of the interviewees were formerly employees of competitors. Also, the German organisation does not only confront its competitors when being with the customers. It also runs booths at university events, co-operates with the same universities, sponsors the same or similar university programmes, gives lectures and offers student projects. Competitors often sit in the same seminars and participate in the same conferences, which is perceived as a chance by the interviewees.

This points out another interesting fact. The German organisation is much smaller than its competitors on the labour market. Those are normally the big companies who are well known not only to the public, but also to applicants. Nevertheless, the German organisation has a corporate culture that is very much different to its all competitors. This also means that people who like to work for one of its competitors may sometimes not fit the culture of the German organisation. One interviewee describes it as followed:

“I could imagine that for some people there may even be a culture shock. If you come from our competitor D, then you are used to a totally different culture. I sometimes see that when we recruit somebody there and they think: ‘What kind of company is that? They are all so soft’. That may be a cliché and may even be wrong and of course people interpret it in their own way. Some people think we would not speak out criticism loudly. Of course this is wrong, the opposite is the case. I have never experienced political games here.” (14:27)

This cultural difference may also be the reason why employees of the German organisation seldom leave to start working for one of its competitors. The German organisation has implemented a very open, casual and respectful culture, which is very much appreciated by all interviewees. Also, the interviewees have a rather critical stance over their competitors and tell stories about their different ways of communication, respect and also the way applicants are treated in a less respectful way. This cultural aspect is very important to the employees of the German organisation and they would rather not fill a vacancy then hire somebody who would not fit into this corporate culture.

Head hunters

In most of the tight labour markets, where attracting new employees is difficult, the opportunity to use the services of a head hunter is a solution. In Germany two different types of head hunters are differentiated; one is more like an HR broker who has a large database of people and sends their details to potentially interested employers, the other type is considered as being a literal head hunter who is acting on behalf of an organisation. This is especially attractive if a sensitive relationship exists between the organisation contracting the head hunter and the organisation where the potential candidate currently works. Here interviewees have mentioned this specific constellation especially with competitors and customers.

What became clear during the interviews is that head hunters are only used for a specific group of employees. This is mainly people for the consulting division and specifically senior positions. However, some of the interviewees who are not in a managing position have expressed their reservation towards head hunters as they see them as dangerous if they work for competitors and try to recruit their colleagues. Also, the high commissions that need to be paid for that service, are a factor for some interviewees who take a more critical attitude towards head hunters. One interviewee said:

“Especially when you have a look at the costs of this service, you may get the impression that those head hunters intend to keep turnover high in companies. I can imagine that this may secure their survival. For that money we pay to head hunters we could easily build up many booths at university fairs.” (16:28)

Nevertheless, head hunters are seen by most of the interviewees as one of the best ways of getting experienced employees for senior position vacancies which cannot be filled otherwise.

Universities

As the results of the document analysis have already shown, the German organisation maintains many intensive relationships with universities. This does not only mean that the German organisation has contacts with universities in general, but sometimes very specifically for example with student organisations, institutes, chairs or programmes of studies. Overall, the interviewees talked about the co-operations with 12 different universities from all over the country. Due to reasons of confidentiality, the real names of the universities are not used here. They are addressed as universities A–L.

The contacts with the universities are mostly managed locally through personal contacts in the different branches. Often these contacts were created when employees kept in touch with their former universities and started to implement a co-operation on different levels ranging from a simple participation in a local campus career fair to sponsorships of programmes of study.

University A should be mentioned here in more detail. This may be the one with which the German organisation has the most established relationship. At this university, the German organisation has been involved in sponsoring activities for the past several years. There is a direct connection with recruitment success as one interviewee stated:

“There is this sponsorship with that programme at university A. The young very interesting candidates who have just joined my team all came from this programme of studies.” (11:17)

One of the interviewees was formerly a student in this specific programme at university A herself. She joined the German organisation after a student project that she had done there as part of the programme. Interestingly this is then again a recruitment channel, as she stated:

“...fellow students got in contact with me and asked how I like it (at the German organisation). Within this programme it is well known which former student joined which company. Then they ask me how I like it here and with whom they could get in contact and so on. I am more than happy to build up such contacts.” (17:13).

This clearly shows how developed this relation already is and that there is even further potential for recruitment activities.

In contradiction to the co-operation with university A, the connection to the other universities is not that advanced yet, but partly also rather strong. For example, they co-operate within projects that institutes are working at, and at the same time maintain good relationships with professors who recommend the German organisation to the best students and also lead them directly to its booth at the campus fair.

The German organisation participates in a special programme with another university, which is a university of co-operative education. The programme is a joint effort of several companies. They hire young people who would like to study at a university and be employed at the same time. In practice the students are at the university for some months, and then they go back to the company and work in IT or on consulting projects. This goes on until they graduate with a bachelor's degree. The advantage of this programme for the German organisation is that it has an influence on what the students learn and when they graduate they are already trained in such a way that they can immediately start working efficiently for the organisation. One of the interviewees explained it as follows:

“I got to know many people who want to go to university I. So you study there and work here. Mostly the lectures take place as block courses so that they are at the university for about 8 weeks, study there, take exams and then come back to us for a project. Our organisation drives this programme strongly and successfully. So nearly all or even all of those students start working here after their graduation.” (14:15).

This successful model also initiates word of mouth which attracts more people who want to join this dual programme with the German organisation and university I. One interviewee even explained:

“Now we have the son of one of our customers here. This customer recommended to his son once to do an internship with us and now he has joined us as a dual student studying at university I.” (18:19)

The same programme is implemented with university L. So this is certainly not only a strong stakeholder relationship, it is also quite a beneficial one.

There are more relationships with other universities, but with them, the co-operation is on a less intense level, which is why they are not described further here. Nevertheless, an overview of the relationships is provided in a table after the ‘university events’ section.

As already mentioned in specific examples, the interactions between the German organisation and the universities involve many different activities. What has not been mentioned yet is that some employees give speeches and presentations and also teach at some of the previously named universities. Some of those activities are part of the normal academic schedule while some have more the characteristics of recruitment activities. In both cases, it offers the chance to gain visibility, present the company and also offer student projects and internships. Those relationships with students are highly valued by the interviewees and seen as a great opportunity for recruitment. One of them said:

“We are especially successful in recruiting two groups of people. On the one hand this is graduates, which we particularly recruited through student projects. This way they have the chance to already find out how our organisation works (...).” (11:9).

Nearly all of the interviewed employees have something to do with students, whether they supervise theses, work together with working students, interns or dual students in their teams or maintain a relationship with one of the university stakeholders.

University events

Many of the mentioned universities offer different events that are directly or indirectly connected to recruitment activities. There are around 16 different career fairs at universities where the German organisation is actively engaged. About half of the interviewees were already involved in such career fairs and were sent there to represent the organisation and recruit new employees. An insight into working at such a booth at a university fair was provided by one of the interviewees:

“Generally you need to be very active at those university career fairs. You have to actively approach the people. They simply linger around looking for

giveaways, so you need to start talking to them and bring them to your booth. And the success rate is little. Our argument for such an engagement is more to increase the level of awareness among those students for our company.” (12:6)

This is an interesting point, especially as similar events that are not organised by universities are seen differently:

“In contradiction to the university fairs there are also some not organised by universities. There we often see direct success of our recruiting efforts and I have already seen several times that we hired people we got to know there. Those events are often called career days or talent days.” (12:6)

Those professional career fairs are often not more expensive than the participation in a university career fair, but they seem to be more successful. On average, one successful recruit resulted from the participation in a professional career fair. The advantage is obvious. Students can apply for an interview beforehand and then when you go there, you have a full day of interviews lined up.

As mentioned before, at all of those career fairs, the competition with competitors is quite hard. Often, several of them are present at the same fairs, sometimes being even direct neighbours.

The advantage of participating in university events is seen in spreading the message that the company exists and that it offers attractive career opportunities.

Media

Media in this context is used as an umbrella term for all the forms of media that were mentioned within the interviews. Essentially, we can differentiate between such media where job posts are published such as Stepstone and Monster, the company's own website and social media in the broadest sense which includes Facebook, Xing and Kununu.

The most important for recruitment seem to be the online platforms Monster and Stepstone. As already described in the document analysis, many applications are generated through the job posts from these two platforms. These two job portals are

seen as essential to spread the message of vacancies by the head of HR as well as by the interviewees. The career section of the company's own website is seen as important as well and in the field of information technology, an attractive online career website is of course vital.

The platforms in the category of social media also need to be mentioned. Facebook has been used for a while to give potential candidates an impression of what it is like to work for the German organisation. During the interviews, it was discovered that most of the interviewees like the Facebook page and look at it regularly. One interviewee stated:

“It is good if you simply want to tick if there is a Facebook page or how the company is visible through it. I did of course check it to see how the company presents itself, but this was just a quick check. It exists, I like the design, it is a part of the whole presentation of the organisation, but not something that may strongly influence my selection if I can read there that those people enjoy running together in the evening.” (14:17)

So the Facebook page is seen as a part of the entire presentation of the organisation as an employer. Nevertheless, people seem to notice it and are also interested to read what the German organisation communicates via this channel. This is quite different to the Xing group which has been set up. Here, the original idea was to stay in contact with people who have left the company and therefore use it as an alumni platform. Most of the interviewees have heard that such a group exists, but have never looked it up. Interestingly, several of them see potential for such a Xing group for recruitment, although more detailed information was not provided.

Kununu was also mentioned several times by interviewees. One of them suggested that she could support her employer by actively rating the German organisation positively on that platform. Interestingly, two of the interviewees see this platform as a danger, as it cannot be controlled who rates the company and if that person is employed or has applied there.

Platforms: seminars, conferences and other events

There are a variety of events, seminars and conferences, which may serve as a way to get to know potential candidates and are therefore referred to as platforms. Most frequently mentioned are seminars and conferences as here people with the same professional background come together. Of course the purpose of such events is not recruiting but the interviewees see those as a great opportunity to keep ears and eyes open for interesting people. The interviewees realised during the interviews that they until now have mostly seen such events as a chance to gain knowledge and to possibly acquire new business. Most of them have not yet thought about the opportunity to go there with the mindset of a recruiter. Nevertheless, several interviewees see this as a great chance and may consider it in the future when they participate in such events to also look out for candidates.²⁷

Other events that may be interesting for recruitment purposes are events where different jobs are presented and schoolchildren are informed about career opportunities. Mostly, such events are targeted at pupils, but there are also events where those universities of co-operative education promote their programmes. Here the German organisation sends its own students to present and advertise this special programme of studies. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned the professional career fairs that are not organised by universities. Some of these events have taken place throughout the year and have proven to be of value for recruitment.²⁸

Awards

Awards are not stakeholders in the common understanding. Nevertheless, behind such awards do stand organisations that are in charge of the audit and the publication of the award winners. As already described in the document analysis section, the German organisation won several awards during the last year. This can indeed be seen as a great achievement. In the interviews, the employees valued those awards explicitly. One interviewee said:

²⁷ For further details please see stakeholder ‘employees’.

²⁸ For further details please see the ‘university events’ section.

“Our organisation dedicates itself to be family friendly, so we also won several awards for this. When I was in the application process I just learned that I will become a father. So those awards meant a lot to me and it was also a great help for orientation.” (15:25)

The interviewees confirmed that those awards are of great importance to the public. It raises awareness and attracts people to apply for a job with the German organisation. The head of HR even stated:

“Winning such awards pushes applications every time. This is great as through those publications that take place when awards are granted, I get explicitly applications that refer to those awards. Also in general I would say nearly every second application that I receive somehow refers to one of the awards that we have won as an employer.” (12:45).

Summary

Summarising all this information of the individual stakeholder relationships cannot easily be done. Generally, it can be said that the interviewees are quite knowledgeable about the recruitment situation of the German organisation and the relevant stakeholders. Also, it was possible to collect interview data for the assessment of those relations. There are many stakeholders for recruitment activities that are being seen as highly important or at least of medium importance. Many of those relationships run on a voluntary basis, which raises the potential influence on the relationships by the German organisation and therefore creates room to manoeuvre. A stakeholder map was created to visualise this stakeholder network and tries to unify the vast amount of information collected for this occasion.

External perspectives

In the previous sub-chapter, the interviewees provided an insight into their perception regarding the stakeholder network for recruitment. It is however always interesting to see it from different points of view. The setting of the interview partners allowed the opportunity to get such an external perspective as well. This is because some of the

interview partners have joined the German organisation during the last two years and when asked how they came to change to the German organisation, they told their stories. Interestingly, some of them just came from two of the most interesting stakeholders in this network, which are customers and competitors.

Naturally, neither competitors nor customers like the idea of their employees resigning and leaving the company. This is also what makes the whole issue so sensitive. It is no surprise to find out that the decision to leave an organisation is mostly done before a person was approached by or learned about alternative employers. One of the interviewees was in his job at a customer of the German organisation for many years. He said:

“I knew somebody who worked for the German organisation and then I searched for information on which consultancies would fit me. Via this contact I was connected to and finally hired by the German organisation.” (16:5)

The simple knowledge about another company seems to be attractive to those candidates, and leads them to either seek the contact or be open when being approached. Another interviewee who worked for one of the big customers of the German organisation explained it the following way:

“At this time I had known the German organisation already for 10 years. They developed the application for software, which I used in a project. (...) I was surprised what high quality services they delivered within several projects. And at the same time they always put the customer as well as their own employees in the centre of their activities.” (18:16)

So this raised his awareness about the German organisation without yet thinking about a change of employer. However, if this changes, opportunities open up:

“I stayed in contact with one of the employees from the German organisation. We met once in a while for a little walk during lunch break. Then one day he realised that I was not happy at all with my working situation and asked me, if I could imagine working for the German organisation. And I said no, never. I look

for something else as I couldn't imagine working as a consultant. But then I thought about it again and changed my mind.” (18:6)

Another interviewee was formerly employed by a competitor. In this case, it was also not an active approach that led him to join the German organisation. When he worked for the competitor, a major change process was realised, leading to dissatisfaction and a huge degree of insecurity within that company. So people basically quit and searched for other jobs. This interviewee did not know the German organisation. He learned about it in a quite unusual way, as he explained:

“Surprisingly I learned about the German organisation during a wedding. I somehow mentioned that I'm searching for a job in that region. Then somebody told me that they currently work with an IT consultancy. So he was a customer of the German organisation and he just adored this company.” (14:7)

What becomes clear from those external perspectives is that the high visibility of the German organisation is crucial. As it works with many different customers, it has multiple chances to not only make a good impression as a business partner, but also as an employer. In one way or another, all of those interviewees who have recently worked for a stakeholder have somehow learned that this is an attractive organisation. This is directly, but also indirectly linked to the image of the German organisation, its reputation and employer branding. In Chapter 6.2.2 this will be investigated more in depth.

6.1.2.2 The Swiss organisation

This sub-chapter presents the findings from the Swiss organisation in regards to the stakeholder network in which the organisation is embedded. Furthermore, it also presents and discusses the findings from the interview phase on the assessment of those relations to the individual stakeholders in several dimensions and shows potentials for future developments.

List of stakeholders

Just like with the German organisation, a detailed code list was used to analyse the interviews from the Swiss organisation, which was built based on the document analysis. Also here the code list, respectively the list of stakeholders, was largely expanded during the coding of the interviews. This led to a stakeholder list that is well grounded in the data material. A table was extracted from the used software ATLAS.ti with the stakeholder code list (see Appendix G and Appendix H). This so-called Codes-Primary Documents Table shows the full list of the stakeholders that were mentioned at least once during the interviews by the interviewees. It also shows how often those stakeholders were coded in total, but also the distribution across the nine different interviews. Again, the numbers provided in this table should not be overrated, but they give us an idea how well information about those stakeholders is grounded in our data material (Friese, 2012).

The Codes-Primary Documents Table demonstrates not only how often a stakeholder was coded in total, but also among the different individual interviews. Some of the stakeholders were coded very frequently. These stakeholders include the cantons, the external HR service, the federal office for health, employees and their networks and referrals, online job platforms, the general private economy and company health promotion providers. Those stakeholders are not only coded frequently in total, but were also coded in almost every single interview, giving us an idea about how well those stakeholders are grounded in our data.

Table 20 below shows a shortlist of the stakeholders relevant for the recruitment of the Swiss organisation. Here some stakeholders were combined or merged. Those stakeholders are marked with the annotation ‘combined’.

Stakeholders	Interview									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	TOTALS
SH_Cantons_different authorities (combined)	3	6	8	0	0	5	4	3	0	29
SH_Education and Science_Universities (combined)	1	1	0	4	0	2	2	0	0	10
SH_External HR-Service	3	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	10
SH_Federation_Offices and Departments (combined)	3	5	7	0	0	8	8	3	2	36
SH_Media (combined)	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
SH_Internal_Employees (combined)	3	4	6	5	7	7	1	8	7	48
SH_Internal_Website	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	1	9
SH_Platforms (combined)	4	3	0	3	2	3	1	2	2	20
SH_Private Economy (general)	0	0	4	1	0	3	1	3	7	19
SH_Unions (combined)	1	2	4	0	0	2	2	3	1	15
SH_Partners Economy (combined)	1	5	6	8	0	3	4	2	1	30
TOTALS:	26	31	40	29	16	41	31	32	31	232

Table 20: Swiss organisation, codes – primary documents table of the stakeholders – shortlist

The stakeholder ‘employees’ is by far the most dominant in terms of quotations and followed closely by federal offices and departments, which seem to play a big role. Also dominantly represented are the various cantonal authorities. This already provides an idea of how the Swiss organisation is embedded in its network. Also, several different platforms such as conferences, congresses and so on seem to play a major role for recruitment. However, all this is only a hint to which stakeholders seem to be most present to the interviewees. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are important or a major influencer in the recruitment of the Swiss organisation. For this, the quotations for each individual stakeholder need to be analysed. The stakeholders as well as the relations between them are described and assessed in the following sub-chapter.

Assessing the relations

This chapter presents most of the information that was mentioned during the interviews. Only the stakeholders Professional Communities and the Swiss Accident Insurance were excluded due to their little importance.

The interviewees did the actual assessment of the stakeholders and their relations during the interviews. As the interviews at least partly followed the provided semi-structure, the interviewees were explicitly asked to discuss and assess. Also here, it needs to be mentioned that the judgements made by the interviewees may be biased or partly subjective. This can hardly be prevented. Nevertheless, the comfortable interview atmosphere and the willingness of the interviewees to participate in the interview

combined with their interest in the topic offered a great opportunity to picture those stakeholder relationships. As with the interview data from the German organisation, this interview material was also retrieved through the mentioned and additional codes through ATLAS.ti. In the following, all relevant stakeholders are described and assessed individually providing a high degree of depth and insight into those relationships.

Employees and their networks

It is no surprise that the employees are one of the most frequently named stakeholders within the Swiss organisation when it comes to recruitment. The employees of the Swiss organisations are very diverse regarding their education and backgrounds. One interviewee stated:

“Well, of course people who are interested in us are also interested in the health issue in the broadest sense. They are psychologists, nutrition specialists, sports scientists, but also biologists or a theologian.” (8:6)

This means that the organisation does not necessarily look out for a very specific qualification for most of its candidates but is open to people with various backgrounds.

Generally, it can be stated that several of the interviewees highlighted that they see the employees as the most important stakeholder in the network for recruitment. This has various reasons ranging from the potential of the personal network to referrals and influence on employer branding. The high visibility of the Swiss organisation within its business network involves its participation in many conferences, seminars, workshops and other events. These are considered as being interesting recruitment channels. One of the interviewees told the story that she attended a conference and gave a speech. She got to know several new people and, a day after, one of them contacted the Swiss organisation, referred to her and applied for a job. Also one of the interviewees was indeed recruited via this channel. So it can certainly be stated that such events offer interesting opportunities for employees to influence the recruitment success of their organisation.

In addition to this rather professional relationship, the employees maintain a personal network with people they know either from a business or a private context. This personal network was frequently said to be of an interesting potential for the Swiss organisation. Some interviewees explicitly said they see word of mouth as something very powerful for the recruitment of their organisation. Those networks can be of benefit in an active, but also in a passive way. Some of the employees said that they have already several times been asked about what it is like working for the Swiss organisation. One of them stated:

“Just recently I was contacted by somebody who I knew privately. She told me that she has seen one of our job posts and asked me for my opinion. I then gave her some information on this specific department.” (2:7)

Besides this reactive way of supporting the recruitment of the organisation, there are also more proactive activities. Some employees actively spread job posts within their personal networks. Mostly the recipients then distribute them even further.

During an interview, the head of HR stated that referrals also go via the ordinary application channel. Often the HR manager is not even aware that an application was created through a referral. However, several interviewees were recruited through such referrals using the personal networks of employees. Therefore, this channel can be considered as being very important, also as the received applications based on a referral are normally of a very high quality in terms of qualifications and fit to the actual vacancy. Interestingly, this spreading of a job post within the personal or professional network is something quite normal for the interviewees and for the industry. One of the interviewees explained it the following way:

“In health management helping other organisations to fill a vacancy is not unusual. This may be different in the private economy, but among NGOs, we are happy to distribute the job posts of others. I do also frequently receive emails with a job post attached to distribute it in my network. We simply work differently here in public health.” (2:18)

This already gives a hint about the specific characteristics of recruitment activities within this industry, which obviously has a high impact on how recruitment is done.

Cantons

The Swiss organisation maintains various relations with its cantonal stakeholders. As health issues lie to a large extent in the responsibility of the cantons, each of them has several organisations that work directly or indirectly with the Swiss organisation. This high extent of co-operation for business is also reflected in recruitment. Although there does not exist an official co-operation agreement between the Swiss organisation and the cantonal organisations in terms of human resources, there are obvious connections. As the organisations work closely together, employees from such cantonal stakeholders are of course interesting regarding their qualification profiles. As the head of HR stated, for some of their positions, a closer understanding and knowledge about the cantonal structure and functioning is inalienable. Therefore, plenty of potential candidates can be found among the cantonal organisations. This is also why nearly all of the interviewees consider the cantonal organisations as being very important when looking out for co-operation partners within their stakeholder networks. It is no surprise that several of the employees and even two of the interviewees formerly worked for cantonal organisations.

In addition to this, the interviewees see those cantonal organisations such as the Conference of the Cantonal Health Directors (GDK), the Health Promotion for Elderly (KAP) or the cantonal people in charge for health promotion as key influencer of the network regarding the image as an employer of the Swiss organisation. Such a high influence and a high degree of co-operation also have another side. The interviewees explained that several of their colleagues who have left the Swiss organisation during the last years started to work for cantonal organisations afterwards.

Federal departments and offices

Besides the cantonal organisations, the interviewees named the different departments and offices of the Swiss federation as being of high importance. This again is based on two dimensions. On the one hand, all interviewees agree that the federal departments and offices, due to their power and influence, play a major role in the image of the Swiss organisation as an employer. Here the Office for Health, which is also the

organisation on whose behalf the Swiss organisation works, is by far the most influential. This is the case as this stakeholder is also the most important for daily business and therefore sets the borders for operations. However, also other federal departments and offices like the Federal department of Economics (Seco), the Federal Office for Social Insurance as well as the Federal Office for Sports were named by multiple interviewees as being important influencers of the Swiss organisation's image as an employer within this network.

On the other hand, federal departments and offices also play a role in direct recruitment. The Federal Office for Health, the Federal Office for Social Insurance and the Federal Office for Sports have explicitly been named by several interviewees as being good sources for potential candidates. This is even proven as several of the current employees have previously worked for these stakeholders. As with the cantonal organisations, those federal departments and offices are also places where employees went when they left the Swiss organisation.

Stakeholder platforms and media

The stakeholders of the various platforms and media were put together in this section as they are mostly very closely connected to each other. There are various platforms such as seminars and conferences that take place regularly nationwide where the Swiss organisation is either represented by one or more employees or where they organise themselves. Such platforms have already proven their usefulness for recruitment. For example, one employee attended the addiction academy conference and got to know somebody there who was interested in the Swiss organisation. The person later on applied for a job. In addition to that, one of the interviewees originally got in contact with the Swiss organisation through such a conference. Therefore, those different platforms are considered to be of high importance for recruitment. The Swiss organisation does not currently need additional recruitment activities as the document analysis has already shown.

This looks somewhat different with media stakeholders. First of all, the interviewees confirm the results from the document analysis that the online job platforms jobs.ch and jobup.ch are the centre of the recruitment activities of their organisation. Those two platforms allow the biggest success in terms of recruitment and are also comparably

inexpensive. This is also confirmed by the interviewees who stated that they themselves learned about vacancies at the Swiss organisation through job posts on those online platforms.

The publishing of job posts online is also significant for increasing the level of awareness of the Swiss organisation on the job market. This is especially interesting as the Swiss organisation is not well known outside of the health sector. In general, social media plays no role for the Swiss organisation. Neither the head of HR nor the interviewees see the need for further activities in this area. Again, this is due to the current satisfaction with recruitment. Therefore, also the online platform Kununu is not an issue. Besides the head of HR, virtually none of the interviewees had ever heard about it.

Website

A stakeholder quite closely connected to the previous one is the website of the Swiss organisation that not only helps to present the organisation as an attractive employer, but also has space to publish job posts. The jobs posted on the website are almost always posted on the formerly mentioned two online job platforms. Several of the interviewees mentioned that they had been interested in working for the Swiss organisation for quite a while and therefore checked the website of the organisation regularly to look out for interesting vacancies.

Partners in the private economy

The Swiss organisation is also active in a field where it runs audits for several private but also public organisations. Several organisations were involved in developing this system. The auditing process involves several stakeholders that range from independent consultants in that field, to the organisation's own trained assessors. In addition to this, the organisations that were involved in the development of the audit system and customers where the audits are run play a role.

The consultants involved in the auditing service are considered to be very interesting as candidates as their qualifications fit well to the requirements for several positions. The same is true for assessors and they also seem to feel attracted to the Swiss organisation. One of the interviewees stated:

“We already had the situation that somebody applied for a job who wanted not to be a consultant any more. If I would now publish a new job post, then I know that some consultants and also assessors would apply. But this has two sides. If I do not hire them, I need to ensure that we can still work together well. At the end of the day I could only hire one person.” (4:18)

This demonstrates the sensitive relation that is in place with those stakeholders. The same interviewee also stated that she has never proactively recruited one of the consultants that she works with. This was never necessary as they always applied unrequested. Also, the relation to those external assessors is multidimensional. They work together on a contract basis and some of them are freelancers in that field.

A special relation is established with the so-called providers of company health care. As already mentioned, those companies were developing the system that is audited by the Swiss organisation among their customers to get a label. Therefore, a strong business relation with them is established. As those organisations are also multiplied to generate more business for the auditing service of the Swiss organisation, they are very important for them. In addition to this, they are seen by the interviewees as being quite influential when it comes to communicating the message of the Swiss organisation as being a good employer. However, this also comes with another issue. As those partners in the private business are interested in recruiting skilled people in this field, they are also looking at some of the employees of the Swiss organisation as potential candidates. This is especially interesting, as some interviewees said that already some employees have left the Swiss organisation to work for such partners. Those organisations are also referred to as the ‘private economy’, as the Swiss organisation itself is a not-for-profit organisation. It does not see this as something negative. As it is the mission of the Swiss organisation to implement its different ideas of healthy life into private organisations, it sees employees leaving and starting to work at them also as a part of its mission. This is indeed a rather unusual view, but it gives an interesting insight into how the Swiss organisation interacts and works within its stakeholder network.

Unions

In the Swiss health industry there can be found a vast amount of different unions that are engaged in various areas. The Swiss organisation interacts by mission frequently with many of them, making them also important stakeholders for its business. One example is a project with a union that resulted in an online platform where people can get information on several health related issues. This platform also offers the opportunity for the involved partners to publish job posts, which is however not done by the Swiss organisation.

Generally those different unions are seen as a good source for potential candidates. The people who work there are often specialists in specific fields and are therefore well qualified and would fit in with the Swiss organisation. A general problem with these unions in the field of labour and work is that the interviewees found it rather difficult to think about them as potential stakeholders to recruit. Nevertheless, it has come out without any doubt that all of those different unions may have a big impact on the reputation of the Swiss organisation as an employer in its network.

Somewhat special kinds of unions are the so-called leagues that are unions specialising in specific illnesses that are engaged in informing and also prevention work. Those leagues do a lot of advertising. This is why one of the interviewees stated that several of those union leagues are much better known amongst the population than the Swiss organisation. The lung league and the cancer league are two that were explicitly named by the interviewees to be of high interest when looking for qualified candidates.

Universities

Universities are interesting in several ways. As there is a high interaction with many universities in the form of common research projects, a strong relationship is maintained. Several interviewees mentioned that those strong built-up relationships with the universities had already led to several hires. One of the Swiss organisation's products was developed together with a local university. Since then, the involved professors also told the students about this product, its development and application. This increases the awareness of students and graduates of the university who then apply for jobs. This shows how fruitful such a co-operation can be and although there are not many such relationships, the existing ones are very much valued.

In addition to this, the interviewees mentioned that the long co-operations with universities have also implemented strong connections between individuals. This is why sometimes employees of the Swiss organisation receive job posts from universities with the request to spread it amongst their network. This is also why those institutions are seen by most of the interviewees as influential regarding the image of the Swiss organisation as an employer in this network.

External HR service

The external HR service plays an important role for the recruitment process of the Swiss organisation. It is a fixed point in the formal recruitment process and supports it strongly. As the document analysis has shown, the lack of resources for the internal HRM leads to the need for external support when job posts are published and first selection interviews are run. This external HR support is provided by one single person who has been doing this now for several years so that a trustful relationship has been implemented. Already during the update of the job description and the creation of the job post, this person was involved in getting clear direction on what type of candidate is needed. This does not only involve formal qualifications, but also personal characteristics. As most of the first telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews are done by this external HR service, the influence on the selection is massive.

Also, the interviewees see this person as a key stakeholder in the recruitment process. This on the one hand as she is running the first selection rounds, but also as she is the organisation's face for the applicants and has therefore a major influence on how applicants perceive the Swiss organisation through that external HR service. Interestingly, this external HR service is not always involved. One of the team managers mentioned during the interview that she never worked with this external person.

Hospitals and people doing their civilian service

In addition to the already mentioned stakeholders, there are two smaller ones where it was not possible to put them under an umbrella term but who should nevertheless be mentioned here. First there are the hospitals which are generally interesting stakeholders. Also, for recruitment there is some potential seen among the interviewees. One of them mentioned that a colleague of hers previously worked in a hospital before

joining the Swiss organisation. However, the interviewees saw no major influence of these stakeholders.

A rather specific thing about Switzerland is the civilian service, which can be done by young males as an alternative to military service. As the Swiss organisation is a federally funded not-for-profit organisation, people who do their civilian service can work there for the period of a bit less than a year. According to the head of HR, the Swiss organisation regularly employs such people. The advantage is that similar to an intern, the Swiss organisation can see how the person works and if there is a vacancy at the end of the civilian service period, it may offer him the position of a trainee. This was precisely the case during the interview phase. Therefore this recruitment channel should not be left out.

Summary

Summarising up such a chapter covering multiple stakeholders, relationships and assessments cannot easily be done. Generally, it can be stated that the interviewees are all well informed about the recruitment process of the Swiss organisation. This is not only the case as they all went through this process or are supervisors, but also as some of them were involved in selection interviews even as normal team members. The interviewees were not only willing to talk intensively about the stakeholder network for recruitment in which they are embedded. They were also contributing valuable information to assess the existing relationships in general and in regards to recruitment. Surprisingly, the interviewees do not see their network through the eyes of a recruiter. As the mission of the Swiss organisation is to work with multiple stakeholders on a daily basis, the business is its main concern. This is also the case as the interviewees do not currently see the need for further recruitment activities and therefore do not see the point in activating their stakeholders for recruitment purposes. Nevertheless, the interviewees see their stakeholder network as highly influential on their reputation as an employer.

External perspective

Generally, the external perspective offers an interesting additional insight. However, collecting additional information on those perspectives only makes sense if additional insights are expected and likely to be collected. In the case with the Swiss organisation, a rather interesting situation can be observed. The organisation does not have a real recruitment strategy. This is nothing unusual, however, it seems like the organisation is also not in need of such a strategy. As the head of HR and other interviewees stated, they do not face difficulties in finding proper candidates for vacancies and receive many more applications than needed. This satisfaction with the recruitment success does not ask for additional recruitment activities or co-operations with stakeholders for recruitment. Besides that, a selection of stakeholders to interview would have been extremely difficult. This is the case, as the Swiss organisation does not normally only have one, but mostly multiple contact people among its stakeholders for different issues. Also, there is no co-operation in terms of human resource management whatsoever, which means that the staff at the Swiss organisation is not very sensitised on recruitment issues.

Interesting information could only be collected therefore on the perception of the Swiss organisation as an employer and the influences on that within the stakeholder network. On this issue, the interviewees were very talkative. The collected information on this topic is authentic and therefore quite valuable, as several of the interviewees had worked for stakeholders of the Swiss organisation previously. A deeper insight into those findings is presented in the following chapter.

6.2 Addressing the research questions

This chapter refers back to the research question and its sub-questions which build the basis for this study. The following three sub-chapters present the collected data and the results from the data analysis to provide answers to the regarding research sub-questions.

6.2.1 Stakeholder map

The first research sub-question (see Chapter 3.1) is stated as following:

What does the stakeholder map for the employee recruitment activities look like for the two cases?

Based on the analysis of the stakeholder networks, the idea of this sub-chapter is to bring all the information collected, analysed and described in the previous chapter together into a visualisation.

6.2.1.1 Stakeholder map for the German organisation

The here presented stakeholder map was created using the software ‘MapEquation’. The programming for these maps was done by the author via pajek. Mapping such complex networks is a challenge, especially as many existing links between the stakeholders should be shown to provide an overview of the relationships between the stakeholders of the entire network. The following map provides such an overview on the stakeholder network for recruitment for the German organisation.

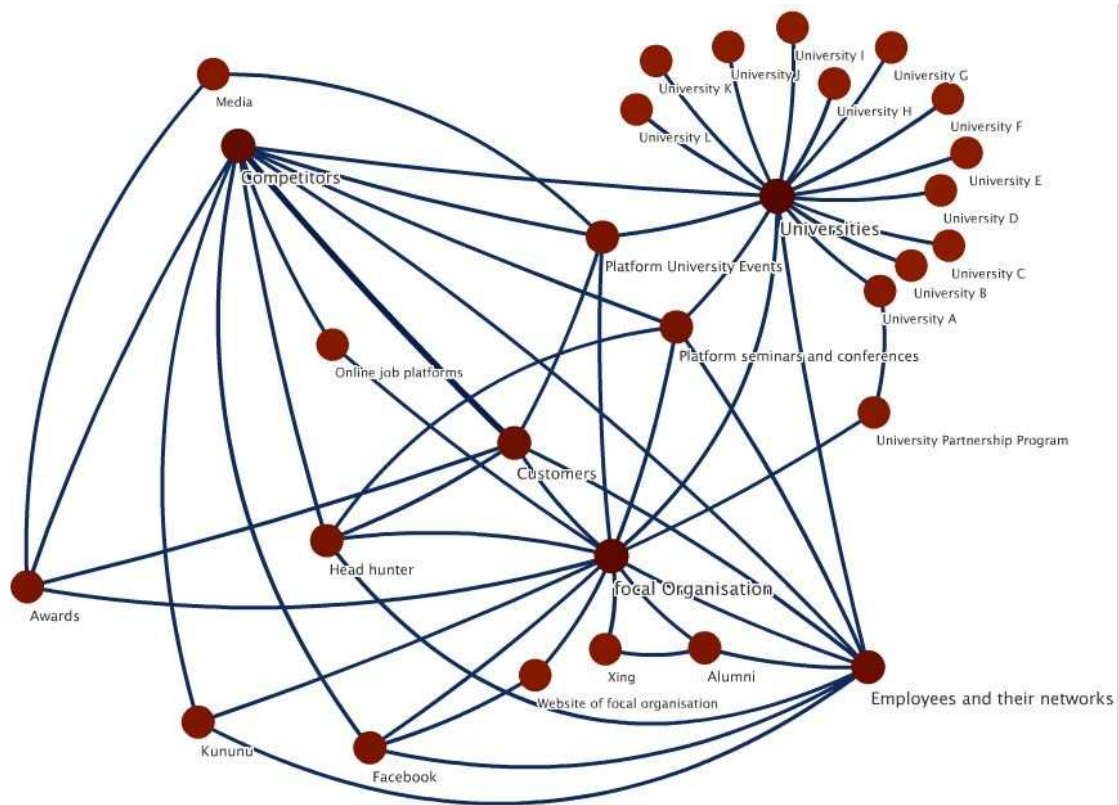


Figure 7: German organisation – full stakeholder map for recruitment

Basically, this map merges the findings from the document analysis with the findings from the interview phase and therefore provides an overview, which relies on a large set of data. All the shown links were described and explained by the interviewees (see previous chapter) and were mostly investigated beforehand based on the document analysis. It needs to be mentioned that MapEquation does not create the map like it is shown above. It only produces the knots and links according to the programming. Then it is up to the user to move the knots and bend the links so a visualisation is created and provides a certain degree of clarity and a good overview.

Drawing such a map of the stakeholder network for recruitment activities is very interesting. It clearly shows that the network is rather complex as there is a big set of important stakeholders. This is also confirmed by the document analysis where it became clear that people are recruited by the German organisation through a large set of different channels and activities. This map should be used as a basis for the following chapters in which the influence of the internal stakeholder perspective on recruitment and employer branding is investigated.

6.2.1.2 Stakeholder map for the Swiss organisation

As with the German organisation, the idea of this sub-chapter is to bring all the information collected, analysed and described above together into a visualisation. For this also a stakeholder map was created, again using 'MapEquation'. Also here the author used a pajek format for the programming. The following map shows the full stakeholder network for recruitment of the Swiss organisation.

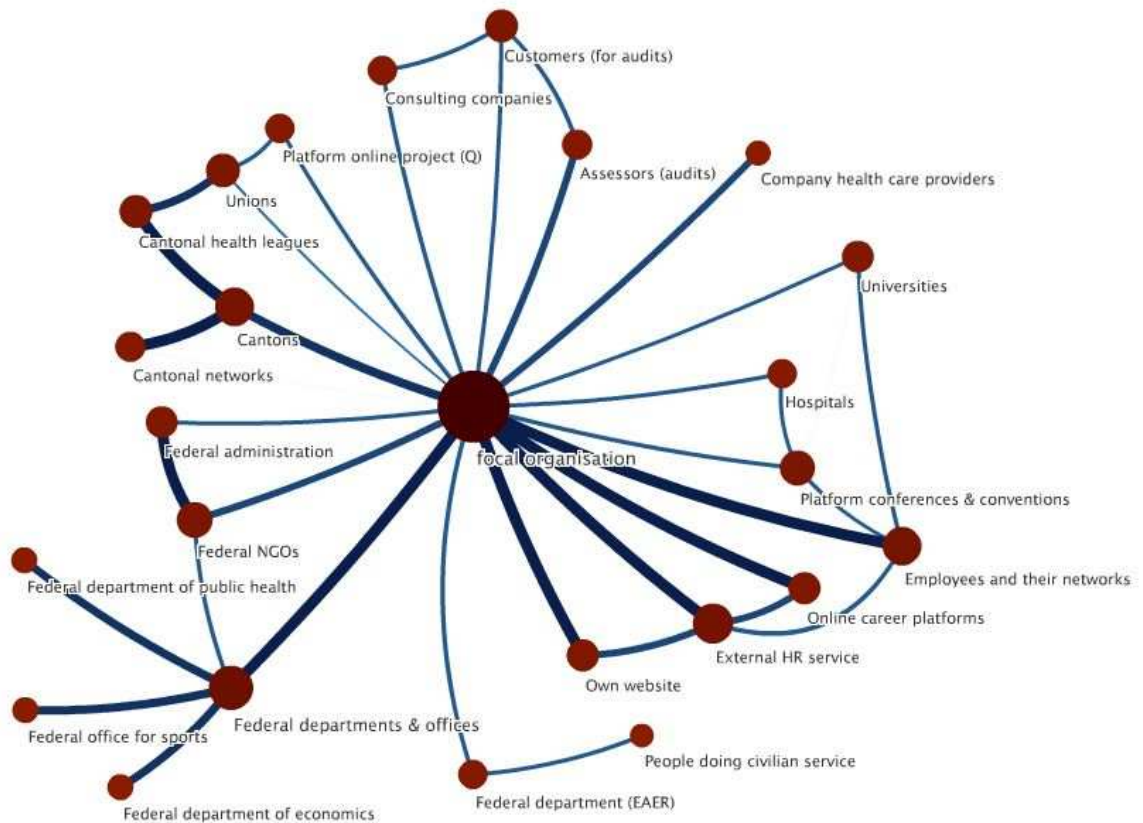


Figure 8: Swiss organisation – full stakeholder map for recruitment

Legend	
Knots	Stakeholder; the bigger the knot, the higher is the importance of that stakeholder for recruitment
Links	Connection between Stakeholders. The thicker the link, the stronger and more important the relationship between the stakeholders for recruitment

The map here does not only show the different stakeholders and the relations to the Swiss organisation and between them. It involves much more information (see legend of the figure above). It becomes clear that the cantons, the federal departments and offices as well as the external HR service and the employees and their personal network play an important role here. Further information is integrated into the thickness of the links. The

thicker the links, the stronger the relations between the stakeholders, and the importance for recruitment. However, some minor information was left out in this map. The individual connections of the stakeholders to the online job platforms were ignored to keep the map simpler and to maintain a better overview. Also, in reality there are most likely more links between the named and visualised stakeholders. However, the map was built on the available information. If a full picture is intended to be created, a much more extensive data collection would need to be done. However, this map does not intend to show the entire networks as it exists. It should be seen as a potentially incomplete snap-shot in time as the whole network is dynamic in its development. It has to be mentioned that in contradiction to the German organisation, none of those stakeholder relations is based on a co-operation of a recruitment nature.

Also this stakeholder map should be used as a basis for the following chapter in which the influence of the internal stakeholder perspective on recruitment and employer branding is investigated.

6.2.2 Influence on recruitment and employer branding

The second sub-research question is addressed in this chapter. It states:

Is there a perceived influence on recruitment and employer branding when an organisation adopts the internal stakeholder view?

Finding an answer to this sub-question requires the consideration of several factors. The findings presented in the previous chapter need to be considered and the complexity and multifaceted stakeholder network may serve as a basis for the understanding of the preconditions.

German organisation

For the German organisation two important additional factors should be demonstrated. This is first of all the perception of the recruitment success. Without this, it would be hard to judge the described influence of not knowing from what basis those judgements are made. Secondly, it is the corporate culture. As mentioned, the corporate culture was named as a great influencer of all recruitment activities, so a short presentation of what

this corporate culture looks like and what influences this may bear is considered to be beneficial.

Swiss organisation

For the Swiss organisation, also several factors should be considered here. One is the actual perception of the recruitment success of the Swiss organisation among its employees. Additional information to understand what the judgements of the interviewees are based on, would be interesting. Another factor is the corporate culture. For the Swiss organisation this does not only involve the internal culture between the employees. It also typifies the rather unusual high degree of involvement of the interviewees with their external stakeholder network and the special conditions and the culture that is lived within the network.

6.2.2.1 Perceived recruitment success

German organisation

During the interviews, the interviewees were asked what they thought about their organisation's success with its recruitment activities. There is of course not only one single answer to this. The HR manager stated that a differentiation needed to be made between junior positions and senior positions. According to her, the German organisation is successful with the recruitment for junior positions, e.g. in consulting. For those positions, it receives plenty of applications and the challenge is more to select the best people. This looks totally different with senior positions. Here it sees even a problem in properly addressing this target group, and also in finding them and finally recruiting them.

Several interviewees praised the multiple co-operations with universities, the supervision of projects and theses and the dual study programme.

Nearly all interviewees agree that many recruitment activities are run and that the given networks for recruitment are made good use of. Also many see the entire recruitment strategy as a success. However, this is not only because of the multiple recruitment activities that are run.

“From my point of view we are successful. For my department we just recruited somebody. I have the feeling that this is a great match. The person may still need to learn a lot but this is an excellent fit regarding his attitudes and his motivation.” (14:11)

This gives already a first hint on the importance of the right fit of a new candidate with the corporate culture. In the following chapter, this corporate culture is more investigated into under the perspective of recruitment activities and the recruitment success.

Swiss organisation

During the interviews, the question was raised how the interviewees would judge the recruitment success of the Swiss organisation. Surprisingly, there was not a single interviewee who stated the recruitment success of the organisation to be low or who pointed out rather critical aspects of it. The main focus on online platforms to publish job posts seems to generate a recruitment success that is satisfactory. The head of HR said:

“We have selected the two main Swiss online career platforms jobs.ch and jobsup.ch as they reach more than 1 million people nationwide. Through those platforms we generate enough applications. We would probably search more specifically if we received fewer applications.” (1:10)

The usage of alternative recruitment channels is widely ignored due to the simple reason that no added value is connected with it. This is not only the impression of the head of HR who maintains the best overview on the recruitment situation and its success. Also the interviewees from all hierarchical levels agree with this.

The Swiss organisation is also seen as an attractive employer among its employees. This was mentioned by several of the interviewees. Nevertheless, the interviewees are aware of this lucky situation and find it quite luxurious that their organisation is able to recruit successfully by only publishing job posts online. One of them said:

“We are a bit reluctant as we are aware of the situation that we receive at least 70 applications for one vacancy. Maybe we are in a situation which is too comfortable.” (6:18)

An interviewee from the communications department tried to explain why the organisation so successful. He stated:

“So I have to say yes, we are successful. However, this may not only be because we are so good, but because the topics we are working on in health management are very attractive for many people. So the hype around the topic may play a big role.” (9:12)

Based on those findings from the interviews, it can be summarised that the interviewees of the Swiss organisation see their organisation as being very successful in recruitment. The image as an employer is perceived as being quite attractive. This is not only based on the characteristics of the organisation, but also on its field within the health industry that attracts potential candidates.

6.2.2.2 Corporate culture as influencer

The corporate culture seems to play a major role for the recruitment and the stakeholder network. This is why it is explained further in this sub-chapter in more detail which also allows us to understand the influence on recruitment and employer branding for both organisations much better.

German organisation

The corporate culture of the German organisation was an issue that was discovered as being of significant importance during the interviews. Its influence is multiple and ranges from the different steps of the recruiting process to the entire working environment. Generally, this corporate culture can be described as open, co-operative, valuing, appreciating, trustworthy, friendly and with a focus on work-life balance. This however comes often along with efficiency. It can be demonstrated by going along the recruiting process. As soon as an application is received and is electronically delivered to the regarding supervisor, he or she has no more than three days to decide if an

interview should be scheduled or not. Thereafter, in the case that it is requested, an interview is immediately scheduled. This quick process builds the frame that allows the German organisation to be much faster than its big competitors. With successful candidates, the time between receiving the application and the sending out of the contract is three weeks or often even shorter.

The German organisation tries to involve not only the regarding supervisors and heads of business units in the interviews, but also ordinary employees who may become team colleagues with the candidate. Through this, the organisation values the contribution and opinion of the employees. Within these interviews, the corner stones of the corporate culture are explained to the applicants. Besides attractive office spaces and modern furniture, the German organisation provides free coffee, fruit and beverages as well as table football and organises several free-time activities like sailing or running. However, this is something that is easy to copy. On top of that, the organisation shows its corporate culture and focus on work-life balance with the working conditions. The head of HR explains it the following way:

“Well, this is often an issue with the candidates applying for a job in consultancy. They want to know how it is with travelling. So we explain to them that we try to organise with the customers four day working weeks. The fifth day is then the gentle passage to the weekend on which they may go to some internal meetings, hand in their receipted expenses form or such things, but then also to go home on time. We know that during those first four days, the forty hour week is already done. So we do not have office days on the weekends and also try to not have seminars on weekends either. (...) We say we want our employees to relax during their weekend and then start the next week refreshed. And this we tell the candidates during the interviews.” (12:42)

First, this may not yet sound that spectacular, but in the German consulting business, working six or sometimes seven days per week is not unusual, as some interviewees also explained from former employments. Besides that, the corporate culture of the German organisation is driven by a high degree of trust between subordinates and supervisors. Employees can even talk to members of the board of directors without an appointment. This all leads to a quite open and friendly culture that can be seen as rather

untypical for the consulting business. That also means that the fit between this culture and applicants is of essential importance. One of the interviewees described:

“Most of the people who are employed with one of the big national consulting companies do not fit us and our mentality. I know it from personal experience as the son of some friends of my wife’s mother once applied for a job here. He worked for the big competitor B. This guy applied with such arrogance. He said basically: ‘Here I am currently working for competitor B, but of course I would fit perfectly to you – when can I start?’. I saw his application; it was a simple audaciousness. Then I simply thought, he should better stay with those people at competitor B, he does not fit here at all.” (18:21)

Obviously this was different with the interviewees who were all recruited by the German organisation. Interestingly, all of them did not only remember their own recruitment process very well, but nearly all of them mentioned that they got a first impression of this corporate culture very early on and that this impression has proven to be authentic right up to today. It is also about the atmosphere that applicants may experience. One interviewee stated:

“You need to be authentic and communicate this properly. I also think when applicants come here to our offices it is important what they experience when they come here to the reception and how they are called to the meeting room, and how they are said good bye to. They see this here directly, also how the employees interact with each other and this is very important. If they would come in here and the atmosphere is cold and nobody is visible this would give a strange picture. With us it is different. Here you see how people get along with each other and that they treat each other in a friendly way. Obviously they are having fun and this is communicated implicitly. If you then tell this in the interview then people see that it is authentic.” (12:41)

The executives of the German organisation highly value that corporate culture. They show this by always joining the second interview with every single candidate. This is of course very time consuming and therefore cost intensive. However, this is especially perceived as being of great value for the candidates. One of the employees said to this:

“What really impressed me was that this executive spoke with me for more than one hour, although it was already clear that they will offer me a contract. He simply wanted to get to know me. This appreciation and valuation was simply impressive. This is so much different with other companies.” (14:9)

Such or similar statements were made by almost all interviewees. This gives a great idea about how important this valuing of corporate culture for applicants is.

To sum this up, it certainly needs to be mentioned that the corporate culture of the German organisation is perceived as a great asset by its employees as well as by its applicants. This is also manifested through the rankings on the online platform Kununu, where applicants can rate their experience. Nevertheless, this also has a downside. As one interviewee has explained, this corporate culture does not fit all candidates, especially often not the ones who liked working for one of the big competitors which maintain a completely different culture. Therefore, this corporate culture also limits the pool of applicants, especially among the more experienced people, who maybe currently work for one of the big competitors.

Swiss organisation

As indicated before, the Swiss organisation maintains also a special culture which impacts not only its image as an employer, but also directly influences their recruitment activities and behaviour. During the analysis, this specific circumstance was discovered and is presented and explained here. The influence is multiple and as such it also has an influence on several phases of the recruitment process.

Here we need to differentiate between the internal culture of the Swiss organisation as it is maintained and the culture of its stakeholder network. In terms of the internal culture, it needs to be mentioned that the mission of the Swiss organisation stands in the centre and there is a high degree of fairness and neutrality. This is very clear when it comes to referrals. All candidates who apply for a job are treated alike. On referrals the head of HR stated:

“Referrals do not get on my desk via an employee. They apply like everybody else and then maybe an employee comes to me and tells me that this person has applied or will apply and that he or she is really good. I think this is a bit special in Switzerland due to the mentality.” (1:18)

This gives a first impression of the mentioned fairness. Another aspect is appreciation. A culture of appreciation is certainly maintained by the Swiss organisation. An example mentioned by one of the interviewees makes this more explicit. It was said that during the selection process the organisation would of course at one stage decide whom to hire. In this case, it calls the other applicants and tells them personally that they were not selected. To only send out a simple letter is not considered to be appropriate. Besides that, the Swiss organisation shows appreciation through participation. During the selection process, it also involves the team members. The idea is that the employees should see their potential new supervisor or colleague during the selection process and can therefore influence the decision on the selection. Not only the employees, but also the applicants, value this participation.

The formerly mentioned high exposure in the stakeholder network is also an issue when applicants want their employers not to know that they applied for a job at the Swiss organisation. One interviewee, a head of a department, explained that in such cases pre-interviews may be organised at a neutral place where the candidate can talk to the potential future supervisor and find out if an application would be promising. This discretion is highly appreciated by those candidates from within the network.

As the mission of the Swiss organisation is to also spread its knowledge in the health sector to private organisations, this is also something that can be seen as rather unusual from the recruitment side. In one specific field where the Swiss organisation offers audits for private organisations, it sees itself as an educator for companies. This leads to the rather special situation that when an employee from this department leaves and starts working in this field for a private organisation, it also sees this as a success as its knowledge is transferred according to its mission. Therefore, it is seen as natural that people join the Swiss organisation, learn something and at one point leave the organisation.

This is indeed a rather unusual thing for the human resource management. In addition to this, the culture is also not very competitive when it comes to recruitment. One of the interviewees stated that they would not want to head hunt people from other

organisations. Interviewees clearly say that such things are not appropriate within their stakeholder network.

This brings us directly to the stakeholder network in which the Swiss organisation is embedded. The culture or the behaviour is also impacting the recruitment situation of the Swiss organisation. It can be said that the culture of the Swiss NGOs and NPOs in the health industry is quite interesting. If an organisation has a vacancy, it sends the job post out to several of its stakeholders and asks them to distribute it further. This is rather unique as it implies little competition among the various stakeholders for staff. Also, the interviewees stated that this is normal and that it happens frequently. Interestingly, interviewees do not see a danger in this. One stated:

“I think the market is free and if I do not offer enough attractive jobs and the people leave because of this, and then it is my own fault. Then I have to learn.”
(4:13)

According to this interviewee, the Swiss organisation has by its mission to work very proactively within its stakeholder network and this influences recruitment. She mentioned that as it is such a normal thing to work with many external stakeholders, there is no fear of contact, or of searching for potential candidates via or at those organisations. This is also impacted by the fact that the Swiss organisation is very highly visible within its stakeholder network, drawing the attention of people who may look for another job. This is verified as most of the employees of the Swiss organisation formerly worked for one of its stakeholders.

6.2.2.3 Influence on recruitment and employer branding

Now, as the frame has been set through the previous chapters on the perceived recruitment success and the corporate culture, a closer look at the perceived influence of the stakeholder perspective can be taken.

German organisation

At the later stage of every individual interview, after having talked about the stakeholder network, the multiple links and relations, this issue was raised. Basically,

the interviewees were then shown a simple draft of a stakeholder network. Then they were asked what would happen, if they had a visualisation of their own organisation's stakeholder network for recruitment and if they think that this may have an influence on recruitment or employer branding. This is especially interesting as most of the interviewees have not yet thought about such a network. As many of them work in consulting, visualisations however are attractive to them as this is often a part of their daily business. This sub-chapter presents the findings on the interviewees' perception about the influence of adopting the stakeholder perspective on recruitment. In other words: What would change, if there was such a stakeholder network for the German organisation's recruitment and it started thinking about this network and considering the involved stakeholders?

The findings on that can be considered to be very interesting and multi-dimensional. All interviewees said that they would appreciate having a stakeholder map for recruitment for various reasons. Also, all interviewees agreed that such a map would have influences on their actions. These can be categorised into direct and indirect influences.

Indirect influences

Adopting the stakeholder perspective is generally perceived by the interviewees as having an influence. Some of them see its influence in a rather indirect way stating that it would have an influence but that they could not explain what kind. One person said that this would widen their knowledge base and therefore help them when making decisions or simply adding another perspective.

“Well, this would definitely have an influence on me. I work like this. When I see a one-page map, this would definitely do something with me. I think I am not the only one in this company who is like this. If I would have such a stakeholder map, it would be especially helpful if I am currently working on the development of a topic or a market development – this would for sure help me here. And personally I am always open to new or unusual perspectives.” (11:25)

Interestingly, and also a bit surprisingly, this openness for alternative approaches was frequently recognised. The interviewees gave the impression that they are enquiring and want to learn more about the stakeholder perspective. Some of the interviewees would

start with the stakeholder map to simply analyse it and reflect on its content. One of them said:

“It is the question if we see a lot of opportunities for improvement when we see the as-is-state. If yes, then I rather see this as a visualisation where we currently stand and where we maybe want to go. A concrete benefit must then be deviated from the activities.” (14:38)

As mentioned, many of the interviewees would take this chance to better understand the whole recruitment situation and therefore get a better overview on where relationships are already implemented, how strong they are and so on. On the one side this is seen as a chance to better understand and analyse the current situation, but on the other side this is also seen as an opportunity to get prepared for the future. The following two quotations present exactly this:

“I surely think that adopting the stakeholder perspective would have an influence. We need to become aware of whom we could actually approach. What would also be important here is to see which stakeholders are involved for the recruitment and maybe also the potential benefit from the co-operation with them, like how many applications came through each channel? Furthermore it would then be interesting to see how good the relationships are, how they are currently managed and what can still be built up and what could be left out.” (17:28)

“Yes, I surely think so, especially as it will not become better with the situation on the labour market and the recruitment of new staff. Therefore I really think that this is important and may gain value for our recruitment efforts.” (16:40)

It is of course not easy to confront the interviewees with an approach like the stakeholder perspective. However, it turned out that all of them had few difficulties when seeing a stakeholder map to start thinking about what it would be like taking this as a basis for management decisions. However, not all of them would simply accept such a new perspective. Nevertheless, even those few people who were rather critical stated that this would indeed lead to inspiring discussions on the recruitment situation and on the mapping as well.

Direct influence on recruitment and employer branding

Clearly the interviewees see the direct influence of adopting the stakeholder perspective in recruitment on the allocation of resources. As this is a new perspective and assisted through the visualisation of the stakeholder map, a critical assessment of the current situation would be done by nearly all of the interviewees first. This allocation of resources is described by one interviewee in more detail:

“Then you will learn which recruiting channels you can intensify. Also you may see some and find out that it is nonsense to invest time and money further in this stakeholder relation as others are much more important (...) Or that you may see it is most beneficial to look for experienced candidates among our customers. (...) I think that we could learn a lot from that. The HR manager would for sure profit from this – all of us would.” (18:22)

This is a rather strong statement that implies multiple things. However, this interviewee sees a high influence on recruitment when adopting the stakeholder perspective and already assumes several actions that may arise from it. Other interviewees go in the same direction, but not all of them can picture such concrete ideas for the allocation of resources. Not only was the simple allocation of resources named. The multiple times that the extension of the knowledge based was mentioned may also lead to a better targeting for the recruitment activities. It would allow better targeting of different types of candidates, e.g. senior consultants and therefore isolate the most promising channels from the stakeholder network.

Another concrete influence was pictured by an interviewee who stated:

“We may get more applications and more employees afterwards. So it will mainly impact the HR department. But it is certainly also interesting for all others to realise in which stakeholder environment we are embedded in.” (17:29)

Besides all those already quite concrete influences, some interviewees also highlighted the impact on the image of the organisation and the employer branding. Some interviewees simply wanted to make a point that if they started to think in those networks, that this may lead to actions that possibly lead to a higher visibility of the

German organisation within the stakeholder network as well as on the labour market. This view is shared among several interviewees who also see that the German organisation could much improve in this regard and therefore see a clear influence on the recruitment. One of the interviewees brings it to the point by stating:

“I think that when we start thinking in those networks, that we may also indirectly become more attractive to potential candidates. This may be caused by the simple issue that this would allow us to better understand and penetrate the market. Making this much more transparent will offer us the opportunity to position the German organisation much better as an employer within those networks. I can really imagine this.” (16:40)

Swiss organisation

Also with the Swiss organisation, the influence on recruitment and the employer branding was picked out as a central theme during all the interviews where the interviewees were shown a simple stakeholder map. Looking at this, they were also asked what would happen, if they had a visualisation of their own organisation's stakeholder network for recruitment and if they think that this may have an influence on the recruitment or employer branding. In contradiction to the German organisation, the employees of the Swiss organisation are already quite used to thinking in such networks, as it is part of their daily work.

The following paragraphs present the findings on the perceptions of the interviewees about the influence of adopting the stakeholder perspective in recruitment. Again, in other words: What would change, if there were such a stakeholder network for the Swiss organisation's recruitment and if the organisation started thinking in this network and considered the involved stakeholders?

A first thing that needs to be mentioned is that assuming that there would be such a stakeholder map is already partly inaccurate. This is due to the fact that the Swiss organisation has and maintains a list of its stakeholders, meaning that the interviewees are quite aware of the general stakeholder network in which the organisation is embedded. As a result of this, thinking about that network from a recruitment perspective was comparably easy for the interviewees. Accordingly, the interviewees

said that there is a high potential when adopting the stakeholder view for recruitment instead of a sole business focus. None of the interviewees disagreed with this.

Interviewees also clearly expressed that despite thinking in networks regularly, doing this with a recruitment focus is something rather new to them. One interviewee argues in the same direction and even suggests how this could be put into practice.

“It is right that we have very many contacts every day and in the end we could profit from those also for recruitment. I think this must be decided top-down and we would need a process to rely on. An additional step in the recruitment process could simply be ‘thinking about potential partner, identify and approach’. I think we could put something like this into effect.” (6:22)

Other interviewees highlighted the idea that adopting the stakeholder perspective for recruitment may open new opportunities for recruitment. However, one interviewee also mentioned that due to the formerly explained culture in the network, approaching employees of other organisations would not be something proper to be done. Generally, it can be stated that the interviewees see their stakeholder network as a big asset for successful recruitment. This is even pushed as the Swiss organisation is quite exposed within its network, which affects employer branding. According to them, the high exposure within the network leads to a high visibility to influence the employer branding of the Swiss organisation.

6.2.2.4 Summary

This sub-chapter presented nothing less but the answer to the second sub-question of the research question. The answer here is a clear yes. For the German case, there is a perceived influence on the recruitment of the organisation when a stakeholder perspective is taken. This influence can be multi-layered. It ranges from the simple extension of the knowledge base and a starting point for discussions up to concrete ideas such as how resources may be relocated, what stakeholder relations should be intensified, created or terminated. This may then also open up opportunities to take actions within the network. Those actions could then also have a direct impact on the recruitment success of the organisation and may directly or indirectly support the employer branding of the organisation.

This is very similar to the Swiss organisation. Here the interviewees also perceive an influence on the recruitment of their organisation when the stakeholder perspective is taken. As the Swiss organisation is already operating in a very stakeholder oriented way, the adoption of the stakeholder view for recruitment is nothing highly abstract for its employees. They see the activation of their existing partners as a chance and opportunity for success in recruitment. Nevertheless, they cannot become concrete with this because of the current success in recruitment. There is no need for more activities in this regard as perceived by the employees as well as by the head of HR.

It has become clear that the stakeholder perspective does not only have an influence on direct recruitment, but also on the employer branding of the organisation through its high involvement with the stakeholder network. The explicit benefits, risks and opportunities that are seen in this, are presented in the following chapter.

6.2.3 Benefits, risks and opportunities

The previous chapter has shown that there is indeed a perceived influence of the internal stakeholder view on the recruitment of the two organisations. This chapter aims to investigate this more deeply. Some first hints about potentials were shown in the previous chapter. However, in addition to the general question on the influence of the internal stakeholder perspective on recruitment, the interviewees were at a later stage of the interviews asked more concretely. They were asked to imagine being able to manage such a stakeholder network for recruitment proactively and then talk about the risks, benefits and opportunities that are connected with this. This however is not simple fiction. As the interviewees were able to think themselves in the stakeholder network for recruitment of their organisation during the interview, they were able to become quite concrete with the answers to those questions. In the following, those answers on the benefits, risks and opportunities are presented in more detail. The basis for this analysis was provided through a risks and benefits code list that has previously had its usefulness proven by Sachs, Rühli and Kern (2007a).²⁹ The individually used codes are presented in the following sub-chapters.

²⁹ For further information on this part of the code list, please see Chapter 2.6.6.

6.2.3.1 Benefits

For both organisations, different code lists have been created in order to analyse the provided information. Therefore the two cases with their perceived benefits are presented separately in the following.

German organisation

The following Table 21 provides an overview on the codes that were used to analyse the interview transcripts in regards to the perceived benefits connected to adopting the stakeholder perspective in recruitment. All in all, 27 codes were used that are based on the industry structure view, the resource-based view as well as on the socio-political view.

Benefit Codes	Interview										TOTALS:
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
2_Benefit_ISV_Cooperation	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	7
2_Benefit_ISV_Dependency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_ISV_Differentiation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2_Benefit_ISV_Influence	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	3	7
2_Benefit_ISV_Multi-functionality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_ISV_Satisfaction with quality of cooperation	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5
2_Benefit_RBV_Ability to communicate	0	2	1	2	3	2	4	1	1	4	20
2_Benefit_RBV_Core values	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
2_Benefit_RBV_Credibility	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	6
2_Benefit_RBV_Emotionality	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2_Benefit_RBV_Experience	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2_Benefit_RBV_Fairness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_RBV_Image	0	3	3	5	5	1	4	1	2	3	27
2_Benefit_RBV_Information	0	1	2	6	2	6	4	3	1	5	30
2_Benefit_RBV_Knowledge	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	8
2_Benefit_RBV_Motivation	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
2_Benefit_RBV_Network	0	1	4	0	3	5	3	1	1	2	20
2_Benefit_RBV_Prejudice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_RBV_Resources	0	0	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	12
2_Benefit_RBV_Transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	3
2_Benefit_RBV_Trust	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	5
2_Benefit_SPV_High Exposure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2_Benefit_SPV_Lobbying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_SPV_Political Interplay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_SPV_Popular Concern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_SPV_Social Responsibility	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2_Benefit_SPV_Sponsoring	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 21: German organisation – benefits of SH perspective

This table gives a first insight into the answers on the regarding question. Nine of those top-down codes were not mentioned by the interviewees, four only once. What can be said already is that the benefits in the areas of Co-operation, Influence, Ability to Communicate, Credibility, Image, Information, Knowledge, Network, Resources and Trust are well grounded in the collected data. However, these numbers of quotations should again not be overestimated. Therefore, it is essential to look at the codes and the

regarding quotations of the interviewees individually. In the following, the main benefits perceived by the interviewees are presented.

For this chapter it was decided to not show the content for the codes one after the other. The reason for this is that those codes are highly connected with each other. This means that several codes have often coded together if something was explained. That can be made clear when starting with co-operation. The interviewees see **co-operation** as one of the main benefits that may come through the active management of the stakeholder network for recruitment. They specifically say that new co-operations could be initiated, for example with institutes at universities in order to strengthen the connection to the university and the students. Also, co-operations are seen as a benefit from which direct results can occur. An example named by one of the interviewees is that through better co-operations with professors, they could recommend the German organisations to only their best students as a potential employer. This already shows the close connection to the benefit **influence**. Additional co-operation such as this could help strengthen the relation to universities and may open up opportunities to influence the content of study programmes, for example. Through this influence students would be educated differently and may then fit better to the German organisation's criteria when employing people. Influence could also be gained through helping out with teaching at universities, as it is already partly being done by several of the employees. Those open up the chance to promote the German organisation as an employer to the university and the students directly. Also, influence can be built up through making better use of the organisation's Facebook page. This page offers the opportunity to not only show and present the organisation as an attractive employer, but also to influence the decision of candidates of where to apply.

Again this is also strongly connected to another named benefit, which is the **ability to communicate**. Communication is considered to be essential for recruitment and for employer branding specifically. Managing stakeholder relations efficiently provides much better and more opportunities to communicate messages to the network and to potential candidates. The communication can take place on different levels. There is the communication to the general public to increase the employer brand awareness. In addition, there is the level where the communication to the existing stakeholders can be improved and enlarged. According to one interviewee this could involve better

communication of the working conditions and the corporate culture of the German organisations to customers, competitors and on seminars and conferences. Also, a professional management of the network would allow employees who are alumni to start or improve communication with their old universities and maintain, improve or start a relation with them for recruitment. However, this does not always need to be defined to the very finish. Some interviewees simply see the benefit of finding new opportunities of communication within the stakeholder network for recruitment. It was also mentioned that it does not stop with the external communication within the stakeholder network. Also the internal communication may be positively affected. This would allow the organisation to even better communicate internally its appreciation of its own staff and their work, which may have a positive influence on the increasing turnover rate. The staff may also benefit in the sense that better communication within the network may also support internal communication from employee to employee, which may for example lead to a better detection system, if one person learns that a customer or competitor has started laying off people who may be interesting candidates for the German organisation.

Credibility is also one of the benefits that was named by several interviewees. It is very closely connected to **trust**. The opportunity to strengthen existing stakeholder contacts and to build up new ones also gives the chance to increase the credibility of the German organisation within its stakeholder network. As an example the relations with universities and institutes is named where an improved communication may lead to a higher credibility which may open up new opportunities such as common research projects. Credibility is also achieved through the awards that were won by the organisation and are therefore seen as a great asset. Another chance to increase the credibility is by intensifying the use of the Internet platform Kununu where applicants can rate the organisation. Good ratings here lead to a higher credibility with the general public and applicants in particular. Credibility is also created and increased through the corporate culture that the organisation has.

This is directly connected to **image**, not only as an organisation, but also as an employer. The named awards play a strong role in connection with employer branding. Interestingly, as many interviewees stated, the corporate culture is highly valued by the employees and forms the basis of the organisation. It is because of this that the

Facebook website of the organisation was created to provide an insight into this culture for potential candidates. However, an upgrade of the image as an employer is not only seen as a benefit that can be realised through such online platforms. The personal connection to the stakeholders, especially to customers and universities, is seen by nearly all of the interviewees as vital. They see the employees at the centre of that and also show the benefits that arise from an improvement of the connection between the organisation and its employees and their personal networks.

The **network** benefit is also one of the benefits that was frequently named by the interviewees. Basically, they think that first of all, understanding what the actual stakeholder network for recruitment in which they are active looks like is a great benefit. This may open up several opportunities to extend this network in a meaningful way and intensify or strengthen the existing relationships with stakeholders. The interviewees also argued that networks can be built up everywhere, such as at conferences and seminars and can also be recruitment related, among former and current students and so on. This may lead to multiple opportunities that cannot fully be overseen at this stage.

One of the most general benefits mentioned is **information**. Information is seen by the interviewees in multiple ways. First of all, they see that the better overview on the stakeholder network for recruitment may provide them with the needed information to create ideas such as where to recruit new employees. This information would also serve to decide which relationships should be developed or intensified. In general, they mentioned that the exchange with stakeholders also leads to a better flow of information that may be interesting for recruitment. One example of this is the detection of potentially good candidates among customers. Information is also a benefit if seen as the outcome of the engagement with different universities. Not only do such relations generally lead to a better flow of information, but also the projects and theses supervisions that are offered by the German organisation for students create valuable information. On the one hand, information is gained on the assigned topic, and on the other, the other information is on the working habits and performance of students, which may help them to find the best students and recruit them. Besides the gaining of information, it is also about communicating information. An example of this is the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer to potential candidates.

Last but absolutely not least, the interviewees mentioned another benefit, the **resources**, which are closely connected to most of the formerly named benefits. The better understanding of the stakeholder network for recruitment and the proactive management of it may offer various opportunities for a better use of the given resource. The given resources, namely time and financial resources, could be allocated. Basically, the interviewees said that it offers the opportunity to better tune the recruitment activities to safe resources or to gain better success with them. As an example, they see that if the relationship between the German organisation and the employees and their private networks were strengthened, this may result in many more high quality referrals which may contribute strongly to recruitment success. Also, they see multiple chances to activate stakeholders and make them ambassadors or multipliers of the message of the German organisation being a good employer.

Swiss organisation

First, it is also beneficial to offer an overview on the benefit codes that were used to catch the regarding information with the computer aided qualitative data analysis software. The codes here are also based on the industry structure view, the resource-based view as well as on the socio-political view. As the following Table 22 shows, 18 different risk codes were coded in the data material.

	Interview										TOTALS:
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
Benefit Codes	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	4	
1_Benefit_ISV_Cooperation	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_ISV_Dependency	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	
1_Benefit_ISV_Influence	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_ISV_Satisfaction with quality of cooperation	0	3	3	2	1	1	1	0	1	12	
1_Benefit_RBV_Ability to communicate	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	6	
1_Benefit_RBV_Core values	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_RBV_Credibility	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_RBV_Emotionality	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	
1_Benefit_RBV_Experience	0	4	3	3	1	0	2	2	0	15	
1_Benefit_RBV_Image	1	4	4	6	3	2	1	1	2	24	
1_Benefit_RBV_Information	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	5	
1_Benefit_RBV_Knowledge	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_RBV_Motivation	2	1	4	6	2	3	1	2	1	22	
1_Benefit_RBV_Network	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	7	
1_Benefit_RBV_Resources	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_RBV_Transparency	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_SPV_Lobbying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
1_Benefit_SPV_Popular Concern	7	15	30	25	16	16	12	13	19	108	
TOTALS:											

Table 22: Swiss organisation – benefits of SH perspective

Eight of those codes were only coded once, meaning that on the one hand only one single interviewee has talked about this perceived benefit, but also that this specific benefit is not very much anchored in the data. In terms of groundedness, four benefits clearly stand out. These are the benefits Information, Network, Image as well as the Ability to Communicate. As those numbers from the table can only give a hint on the groundedness, the regarding text passages or quotations need to be analysed individually to get a deeper insight into the interviewees' understanding of the specific

codes and demonstrate relations and characteristics. In the following, the main perceived benefits of the interviewees are presented and discussed.

In this chapter, the content from the quotations is not presented simply one after the other. This is because the different benefits are often highly connected to each other so setting strict borders between them is not beneficial.

Generally, interviewees see getting more **information** as one of the main benefits when adopting the stakeholder perspective. When the numbers of referrals are increased, the information which you may get on candidates before the actual selection process begins is more detailed which can make the decision making easier (this is also connected to satisfaction with quality of communication). When sticking to the employees, some of the interviewees mentioned that they can spread the message of the Swiss organisation being an attractive employer much more in their private networks proactively and also when they are approached e.g. by somebody interested in one of their vacancies. Besides that employees can also spread this message when they are attending conferences and seminars. One of the interviewees explained that she was approached directly on such a conference and was asked about the Swiss organisation by somebody who later applied there for a job. As the Swiss organisation is highly exposed in its stakeholder network, its reputation, which has somewhat improved during the last few years, is also getting better through the network where it is very active. However, although the Swiss organisation is well known in its stakeholder network, it is not very much known among the population. Information about the organisation as an attractive employer could be spread much more targeted within the network. Also, the interviewees see that there are many opportunities to more specifically get information about people who may be good candidates for the Swiss organisation (e.g. who are not satisfied with their current job). This is however not done at the moment on the one hand because the need is not there and on the other that it is seen as something which may not be appropriate to do. Furthermore, the benefit of information is seen connected to the recruitment process. The recruitment process could be much better arranged with the department for communication which is able to then positively impact the employer branding of the organisation through its own channels and spread the regarding information wider and better targeted.

Within the closer stakeholder network, the benefit **network** targets the opportunities to get access to other networks or further stakeholders. This code was most often coded with several of the other codes when it was about intensifying existing relations, adding further co-operation opportunities or finding out more about the network itself. Explicitly, the interviewees mentioned that the network with the employees could be strengthened more regarding referrals and therefore the private and professional networks of the employees can be more explored and activated. Generally, the interviewees see that the potential for recruitment activities or related issues in the network is high and several of the stakeholders could be or become attractive partners.

Also frequently used was the code **image**. Generally it should be repeated that the image of the Swiss organisation within its stakeholder network is perceived as attractive by the interviewees. The interaction with stakeholders is seen as a great opportunity to improve the level of recognition of the Swiss organisation not only as an organisation and business partner, but also as an attractive employer. This is not yet done in a structured way. It can however be done together with many different stakeholders, not even excluding anyone. Nevertheless, the conferences and seminars which employees attend are seen as a very promising platform for this. Also, realising this is not seen as a major challenge. According to several interviewees, improving the image as an employer can basically be done just along the ordinary communication and co-operation with the stakeholders in the daily business life without much further resource investment. However, it was also pointed out that the image as a good employer can sometimes not be improved when acting proactively. Some of the stakeholders, especially the cantonal and federal ones, are quite powerful in terms of their influence on the general image of the Swiss organisation. Therefore, they are also quite influential on the image of the Swiss organisation as an employer, which cannot be controlled much. Nevertheless, it was also mentioned that more co-operations with stakeholders for recruitment purposes would be beneficial as this often allows an increase in popularity that can then be connected to employer branding. This is directly connected with the ability to communicate.

The **ability to communicate** is also one of those benefits that are closely connected to many other benefits. Communication is at the centre of all activities for employer branding. The stakeholder perspective widens the knowledge about who co-operates and communicates with whom and therefore offers the benefit of being able to more

efficiently communicate the images as an employer. Through higher abilities to communicate, job posts can also be sent out better targeted and therefore generate a better return meaning more applications of higher quality. The stakeholder network itself offers the ability to communicate. As the Swiss organisation is aware of the network and its stakeholders, this benefit is already used for business purposes, but only a little for recruitment activities.

Benefitting regarding **resources** is often a more dominant issue as it is here with the Swiss organisation. The comfortable recruitment situation and the high involvement of the stakeholders led to no need for further recruitment activities. This indeed already saves plenty of resources. The only investments to be made are basically for the external HR service and for the online job posts, which is comparably inexpensive. Furthermore, it also saves working capacity for the head of HR. A further more focused way of approaching the stakeholder network is seen as being able to lead to more applications of higher quality and fewer of lower quality, which could make the entire selection process even less resource intensive.

The information provided by the interviewees for **core value** is mostly concentrated on the mission of the organisation and its corporate culture. The good corporate culture is seen to have a high influence on the image as an employer. This could however be better and more proactively communicated within the stakeholder network. Regarding the mission, the interviewees see the benefit for the core value connected with **co-operations**. The great benefit of co-operation is very much valued by several of the interviewees. This is especially the case in terms of co-operation for further education. Here the idea is presented that stakeholders could send staff to the Swiss organisation to work there as interns. Therefore, those people or stakeholders could gain knowledge (according to the mission of the Swiss organisation) and after a while go back to their organisation and use the knowledge there. This is fully following the Swiss organisation's mission to educate organisations in their specific field and also to influence them. This has of course only a marginal impact on the recruitment of the Swiss organisation, but nevertheless it could help staffing lower level positions on a temporary basis. Furthermore, it could also be beneficial for the Swiss organisation's image as an employer.

Also, the relations with the established stakeholders could be improved through building a co-operation. The continuous co-operation with consultants and assessors on a professional basis could also be slightly changed and use those people as a source for potential candidates for the Swiss organisation. Those candidates would already be very knowledgeable about its work, which would then also reduce training needs. However, this is also seen as critical as on the one hand there is a need for the service of those consultants and assessors and no need to move in this direction due to the current recruitment success. This is also connected to the benefit **knowledge**. Furthermore, it was mentioned that co-operation could be built or professionalised for spreading the word about new job posts. This simply means that it could be investigated which stakeholders are the most promising multipliers for job posts and then focus on them for co-operation.

Summary

This sub-chapter has shown the various benefits that the interviewees have seen arising when adopting the stakeholder perspective and managing the network for recruitment and not for business purposes only.

6.2.3.2 Risks

As with the benefits, the interviewees were also asked about their perceived risks when starting to take the stakeholder perspective and manage the network proactively. Again here the two cases are presented separately to allow a deeper individual insight.

German organisation

The following Table 23 shows again the list of risk codes that were used for the analysis of the transcripts with ATLAS.ti. Those 27 codes are similar to the ones used for the benefits.

Benefit Codes	Interview										TOTALS:
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
3_Risk_ISV_Cooperation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_ISV_Dependency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_ISV_Differentiation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_ISV_Influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
3_Risk_ISV_Multi-functionality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_ISV_Satisfaction with quality of cooperation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Ability to communicate	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
3_Risk_RBV_Core Values	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
3_Risk_RBV_Credibility	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
3_Risk_RBV_Emotionality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Experiences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Fairness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Image	0	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	3	14
3_Risk_RBV_Information	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	4
3_Risk_RBV_Knowledge	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3_Risk_RBV_Motivation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Network	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
3_Risk_RBV_Prejudices	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Resources	0	0	0	2	5	1	1	0	1	1	11
3_Risk_RBV_Transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_RBV_Trust	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
3_Risk_SPV_High Exposure	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	6
3_Risk_SPV_Lobbying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_SPV_Political Interplay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_SPV_Popular Concern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_SPV_Social Responsibility	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3_Risk_SPV_Sponsoring	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	3	4	3	13	5	5	4	4	9	50

Table 23: German organisation – risks of SH perspective

As this codes-primary documents table shows, risks are not as much grounded in the data material in comparison to benefits. This means nothing other than that the interviewees were able to say much more on potential benefits than risks. Sixteen of the 27 codes were not used, as the data material did not provide information on their content. When talking about risks, the interviewees mostly imagined risks in the areas of Image, Information, Resource and Trust. In the following, the provided information on the named and discussed risks is presented. Again, the different risks cannot clearly be differentiated from each other as they are often strongly connected. As the previous

table already suggests, not only is the amount of information on risks smaller than on benefits, but it is also due to the variety of risks that the interviewees were able to imagine during the interview process.

When analysing the interviews regarding risks of the stakeholder perspective, the interviewees see them mostly connected with the image of the organisation. This is strongly linked with higher exposure. Interestingly, when talking about risks, many of the interviewees mentioned **high exposure** together with the Internet platform Kununu. On the one hand, Kununu offers an opportunity to communicate with potential candidates, but this is not perceived to be risk-free. The high transparency of the platform and the opportunity for everybody to rate the German organisation rings a warning bell. This is not something that comes out of thin air. Although the German organisation is currently very well rated on this platform, it looks different to some of its competitors. One of them is going through a bigger change process and is experiencing very negative ratings on Kununu which cannot be stopped by the company. The opportunity to not only rate, but also to comment, offers the opportunity for something that can almost be named a 'shit storm'. Several of the interviewees mentioned that this high exposure is therefore a risk for the recruitment efforts of their organisation. Another issue raised in connection with high exposure is recruitment among customers. As was already mentioned, recruiting new employees from existing customers is a highly sensitive issue. The interviewees see on the one hand the chance to find good candidates. On the other hand, they highly recommend that this should not be pushed too hard. In the ideal case, the process should be handled so discretely that the customers do not notice the recruitment efforts. Nevertheless, the interviewees fear that customers may not want to assign the German organisation with future projects if they see the recruitment activities as a danger.

This may also cause risks when the German organisation loses **trust** among its customers. Similar but not as risky, it sees the activation of recruitment opportunities among their competitors. Apart from the cultural difference that may limit the list of fitting candidates, there is also the problem that the German organisation's consultants often see competitors when working with customers. Sometimes they even have to work together or share an office. Offensive recruitment activities may cause some unrest here, which may negatively impact the working situation for the consultants. This is very closely connected to the **image** of the organisation that is also seen as one of the major

risks. In regards to the customers, the interviewees think their organisation may gain the image of being a company which tries to head hunt their employees, which is certainly not a beneficial image. Besides this, they also see the image being in danger in other fields that are often connected to the high exposure that comes along when engaging with the stakeholder network. They also point out the risk to extending engagement with universities and providing more guest lectures and seminars at them. Here they see that the quality of those classes needs to be high and the people giving the lectures need to be qualified and skilled enough to teach them. If this is not the case and an approach is such as that the organisation should simply do this as often as possible, its image as a good employer may be at stake. The same goes for university career fairs. Here the interviewees also see the chance that if they go there too frequently, they may develop an image of being an organisation that is solely interested in young graduates and not in more senior and experienced people. Furthermore, the issue of the corporate culture is raised. Some of the interviewees see that the labour market situation is getting more challenging and that therefore the organisation has to make more and more compromises when recruiting promising candidates in the future. They warn that the fit to the organisation and its corporate culture needs to be considered. Otherwise the current good reputation as an employer may suffer.

Risks connected to **information** were also named. However, the statements on them were very general. One interviewee mentioned that it is important when acting in complex stakeholder networks to not lose the overview and miss out information that may be essential. She gave the example that co-operating with a university in a state where the German organisation has no branch, may still lead to a good attraction of potential candidates. However, if the information on the mobility of the students is lacking, those recruitment efforts are of limited success.

Far more practice oriented are the risks the interviewees see connected with **resources**. Naturally many of the interviewees see that a proactive interaction with the stakeholder network comes with a price in the form of time and money. The current activities are considered to already be resource intensive. Although this is seen differently by others who say that the resources currently invested are rather small, costs are always seen as a discussion point. The different perspectives and insights into the HR work are reflected when analysing those statements. While some see higher success on the labour market leading to many more applications that cause the risk of more work for the HR

department, others see this totally differently. One interviewee pointed out the amount of time that the employees need to invest when many interns join the company and therefore see this as a risk. Those risks can be considered to be comparably small. However, one interesting point is raised here. An interviewee said that the German organisation may run into trouble if it gets lost in too many recruitment activities, e.g. when participating in too many university career fairs, and therefore lose track.

Swiss organisation

Just as with the German organisation, also here in the following primary-codes documents table, a list of the relevant 11 codes are presented that were used to address those different risks.

Risk Codes	Interview									TOTALS:
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
2_Risk_ISV_Dependency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
2_Risk_RBV_Ability to communicate	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2_Risk_RBV_Core Values	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2_Risk_RBV_Emotionality	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2_Risk_RBV_Image	0	1	2	0	2	1	3	1	0	10
2_Risk_RBV_Information	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	5
2_Risk_RBV_Network	1	1	2	0	2	1	2	3	0	12
2_Risk_RBV_Resources	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
2_Risk_SPV_High Exposure	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
2_Risk_SPV_Political Interplay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
2_Risk_SPV_Popular Concern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTALS:	6	4	8	5	11	8	13	18	11	39

Table 24: Swiss organisation – risks of SH perspective

Network and Image are the two codes which were coded most frequently and which are therefore well grounded in the data. Seven out of nine interviewees talked about those two risks. Besides the code information the other codes seem to play only a minor role or are only perceived by one or two interviewees as a risk. However, as those numbers should not be over-interpreted, going through the regarding data material is essential. In the following, the findings on the perceived risks are presented. As already mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, often risks have more than one dimension which is why certain risks are often connected to one or even more additional risks.

It turns out that the two codes **network** and **image** are very highly connected to each other. The following insights demonstrate this beginning with the employees' personal

and professional networks. Relying heavily on employees and their networks for referrals is considered as being a risk as they may also judge people subjectively and with personal sympathy. However, it is also about the sympathy between the employee who recommends someone and his or her supervisor. If the supervisor has some problems with the recommending employee, this may also impact the referral negatively. Furthermore, the interviewees mentioned that it is generally hard to rely on such a network for recruitment purposes. It is seen to be especially risky as it is not easy to find people who have the competence to manage such stakeholder networks professionally. For this, the Swiss organisation needs people who are somehow generalists but also specialists and they need to be able to manage the stakeholder network proactively, also for recruitment. Furthermore, it is also always an issue how much you actively manage your stakeholder network for recruitment. You can of course keep an open eye and ear, but also need to be careful. An aggressive recruiting approach cannot be run in the health industry and would not be accepted by the other stakeholders.

Such recruitment activities are also considered as being a risk as some interviewees see this as not being loyal to their partners with whom they work. It should not negatively impact the professional relationship with the stakeholder. This is especially difficult as the stakeholder network here is also partly built on trust and the stakeholders interact and communicate intensively and openly. Mistakes made are communicated quickly. This is of course strongly connected to the image of the Swiss organisation, which may then be impacted negatively. Another risk raised is that when concentrating too much on the organisation's own stakeholder network for recruitment, there is also the risk that you do not expand your network by only hiring people from the network. Therefore, you stick to the same kind of people with whom the organisation is working already.

Some of the mentioned risks can also be connected to **information**. Recruiting within the stakeholder network also bears the risk that you may recruit people who are also valuable partners you work professionally and productively with. If you try to recruit one of your stakeholders who is a partner for a project, there is also the risk that if the recruiting is not successful (e.g. another person is selected), it may have a negative impact on the stakeholder relationship thereafter. This may also be the case if the information that a stakeholder may be interested in working for the Swiss organisation

is wrong and therefore the person is approached and it turns out to be a mistake and therefore could also negatively impact the stakeholder relationship. Also, the **high exposure** is an issue for that. Recruiting actively within the stakeholder network also bears the risk that the person working for the stakeholder exposes himself or herself and therefore a risk of dissatisfaction is created which may on the long run also impact the relation with the stakeholder. A careful handling of such an application is essential. Generally the Swiss organisation is highly exposed within its stakeholder network, leading to the risk that its stakeholders closely observe every mistake made. This is also due to recruitment efforts. If a recruitment activity is not successful and stakeholders start talking about the Swiss organisation actively recruiting from them, it would be a risk due to the high exposure. They would not appreciate this and it would therefore put the Swiss organisation in a bad light which may then also impact its image as an organisation and as an employer.

Of course when talking about risks, **resources** are mentioned as well. They are seen as a general risk simply because recruitment activities cost money. However, as there is currently no need for more and cost-intensive activities, it is not an urgent matter for the Swiss organisation. Another more serious risk perceived and described by the interviewees is connected to the **core values** of the organisation. Recruiting actively within the stakeholder network is going against the proper behaviour and culture within the network. If it is done in a way that is not accepted by the different players, the core value of the Swiss organisation and its mission are questioned.

Summary

This sub-chapter has shown that the interviewees see only a short list of risks connected to the stakeholder view and their organisation proactively managing its stakeholder network in recruitment. However, these risks cannot be ignored and need to be taken into consideration for any action taken. In the German case, the interviewees' concerns are mostly connected to the high exposure that results from such an engagement with stakeholders, which may potentially also negatively influence the image of the organisation as an employer. In addition to that, the interviewees from the German organisation seen critically that a more intensive exchange with the stakeholder network would require more resources and may also bear the danger of getting lost in the complex network and getting engaged in too many co-operations and recruitment

activities. In the Swiss organisation the interviewees' concerns are mostly connected with the proper and sensitive management of the network as the organisation also heavily relies on the professional relation to the regarding stakeholders. The main risks are seen in endangering those relations and also creating an image which is neither beneficial for doing business nor for recruitment purposes.

6.2.3.3 Opportunities

Besides asking for clear directive responses on benefits and risks when adopting the stakeholder perspective for recruitment, the interviewees were also openly asked for the opportunities they may see. An opportunity does not necessarily have to be characterised as good or bad. During the interviews, the employees of the two organisations were therefore asked differently on this. As can be seen in the interview guide, they were on the one hand generally asked about their opinion of the future labour market situation and their organisation. This question was intended to sensitise them on the issue of change. A question regarding demographics is an example of this. Besides that, they were also asked to reflect on where their organisation falls short in terms of recruitment activities, for example in comparison to competitors. Furthermore, they were directly asked to provide recommendations to improve the recruitment situation of their organisation when acting within their stakeholder network. This implies that the interviewees had the opportunity to not only speculate, but to also imagine other potential or additional stakeholder relationships with regards to recruitment. In the following paragraph, those findings are presented and discussed. IN the following the two cases are presented individually to offer a deeper insight into the perceptions of each organisation's employees.

German organisation

In order to give the opportunity to think about the potential of the stakeholder perspective in recruiting, the interviewees were asked to imagine what the recruitment situation would look like in five years' time. Only one of the interviewees was not aware of the dramatic changes in the labour market that the company is predicted to experience in some years' time. All the others however were highly aware of that. The organisation itself is strengthening its consulting efforts and is therefore growing in this

section, which will increase its demand for consultants for the coming years. As consulting is also the field where turnover is the highest, this will automatically lead to a higher overall turnover of employees and therefore also demand higher recruitment efforts. Particularly the interviewees who often work directly with customers also see that they will be approached more frequently by competitors and head hunters, which additionally may eventually increase turnover. Also the interviewees expect a major impact with the demographic change, which they assume will lead to stronger competition. Others see the situation as already much more dramatic and do not agree that the big challenge will need to be waited for. One interviewee simply stated:

“We are already in the war for talent” (14:29)

Most of the employees agree that the change has already started and that the labour market has already become more difficult for them.

“I think that getting those absolute experts will become more difficult. This has of course demographic reasons, as the demand for experienced specialists will stay high and even increase. And the fight for the young talents who are really willing to perform will become much more difficult and we have to invest more here. This means that we have to structure our activities here even better and increase efforts.” (16:27)

It can be summarised that the employees of the German organisation are highly aware of the changing labour market conditions and pledge for more proactive approaches to be able to face the challenging situation in the future. This openness for alternatives can be considered as being a good prerequisite for adopting the stakeholder perspective.

Recommendations and potentials

As the interviewees are open to new approaches and also see the need for action, they also took the chance to recommend alternative or additional recruitment activities for their own organisation. It demonstrates the openness of the employees of the German organisation. The suggested actions can also be mirrored in the stakeholder network. Again, it needs to be mentioned that the organisation is already working at quite a high

level regarding its recruitment activities and therefore the named potentials need to be seen as even further development steps that may be possible.

Several of the interviewees highlighted the potentials that are connected to the various relationships with universities. Two of the interviewees explicitly highlighted the potential of the lectures that are held at some universities, especially in the field of information technology. Critical views on the recruitment activities of competitors can also be seen with some interviewees. Nevertheless, it is also mentioned that recruiting events like sailing trips, cocktail evenings or barbeques for potential candidates may be an option for the future. However, the interviewees see this rather differently. Several interviewees also mentioned the importance of the alumni network. They see potential in the activation of the Xing alumni group and support the approach to use this later on to bring people back to the German organisation after some time. One interviewee who had participated in one of the university career fairs just before the interview said that he had got to know many interesting candidates at this university. The problem was that these were international students, well qualified, but not German speakers. As the customers of the German organisation require German as the business language, there is no current opportunity to recruit those candidates. Nevertheless, it may be an interesting potential for the future to either help those students to learn German while studying or qualifying them internally later on with the necessary language skills.

Another untapped source that may have potential for the future is the activation of specialists from the banking side. An interviewee explained that those people who work in a responsible position at banks often do not even think about changing sides and becoming a consultant. As the interviewee himself went through this, he recommended more open communication in this potential career path and therefore attracting the attention of those people. Another interviewee mentioned that it would be worth thinking about employing the company's own head hunter who would do nothing but look out for suitable candidates for the vacancies of senior positions. Finally, one interviewee recommended that he wants to generally learn more about the German organisation's recruitment channels that are in use. He sees a potential in this as it could help to focus activities even more and become more efficient, as well as be more creative with recruiting.

Readiness to contribute

Asking the employees of an organisation about what potentials they see for the development of their recruitment activities within their stakeholder network is one thing. In addition, it raises the question whether they would be willing to contribute in a further expansion and development of this recruitment network and what resources would be needed to realise this. The interviewees were asked exactly this. Essentially, it can be said that nearly all of the interviewees demonstrated their readiness and willingness to strengthen their organisation's recruitment efforts. Every second interviewee freely offered to promote the German organisation as an attractive employer more actively in his or her private network. This is something that should not be underestimated, as the document analysis as well as the interview analysis have clearly demonstrated the positive impacts of this, not only to gain more referrals, but also for the overall employer branding of the organisation. However, the interviewees would not only be willing to communicate this more within their private networks, but also when working together with customers, and when attending seminars and conferences. Some also offered to get in contact with their old fellow students and student organisations and try to attract candidates through this channel as well. Not only were such activities named but a slight change in their mindset was offered. Two interviewees directly said that they need to change their way of seeing things and start to open their eyes and ears more for potential candidates in daily business. Furthermore, the interviewees mentioned that they would be ready to give lectures at universities, which fits very well with the formerly mentioned potential to expand such activities. When asked what would be needed to get this started, there was only one response. Seven interviewees said the only thing they would need in order to get started with such activities, would be a bit of time off from work to concentrate on it. Some even said they would need nothing and could start on it immediately.

Swiss organisation

The interviewees here were also asked not only in a directive way for benefits and risks that they see connected with adopting the stakeholder perspective in recruitment. They were also openly asked for opportunities that they might see. It needs however to be mentioned that an opportunity here is not necessarily characterised as being good or bad. On the one hand, the interviewees were generally asked about their opinion of the future labour market situation, which was intended to sensitise them on that issue. On the other hand, they were asked where their organisation could learn something from other stakeholders in their network regarding recruitment activities. In addition to that, they were also asked to provide any recommendations that they see to improve the Swiss organisation's recruitment success in the stakeholder network. The idea was that the interviewees should not only speculate on something, but to imagine other potentially interesting stakeholders for recruitment and such with whom a more intensive co-operation in this regards would be promising. In the following, these findings are presented and discussed.

The interviewees of the Swiss organisation are well aware of the demographic change and its impact on the labour market. As they are active in the health sector, this change also has dramatic consequences not only as there will be a decrease of available workforce, but also as they predict an increase in demand for the services from the health sector. Despite this fact, not a single interviewee mentioned that they are afraid of this change in the labour market and see consequences for their own organisation as being very small. All agree that the Swiss organisation currently enjoys a comfortable recruitment situation with plenty of good applicants for its vacancies. The future is also seen as not being critical for recruitment. This is why there are no further recruitment activities with stakeholders or independently in planning. For the Swiss organisation social media is seen as being expensive and unnecessary. Although some interviewees do not exclude the use of alternative or additional recruitment activities like social media in the future, they don't expect the situation to dramatically change for them.

Recommendations and potentials

The interviewees have shown a high degree of openness not only to explain the benefits and risks which they see being connected to the stakeholder perspective in recruitment,

but also for opportunities which they see connected with it. It needs however to be mentioned again that the Swiss organisation has already implemented the stakeholder approach to a large extent for its main business. This does of course limit the imagination on potential future opportunities when the contact with the stakeholders is more intensified and related to recruitment. Basically, it has to be mentioned that when asked what the Swiss organisation could learn from its stakeholders in terms of recruitment activities, several of the interviewees answered with a simple 'nothing'. Often recommendations and potentials are seen with an internal focus. On the one hand, the recruiting process is seen as something that could be improved. Critique is mainly made on the time management. Reflecting on their personal experience, some interviewees also explained that three or four weeks of waiting time between the application and an invitation to an interview is far too much.

Improving communication is seen as a further potential by the interviewees. The internal communication process regarding spreading job posts is not yet at a high standard. There is no formal process for this. When a new job post is created and published, not all employees get a note that somebody is needed to fill a vacancy. Interestingly, the interviewees disagreed on this point. Some stated that of course everybody gets a note, while others explained that they sometimes did not even know that the team next door was looking for somebody. It seems like there is indeed an opportunity to strengthen this process to internally as well as externally increase the awareness about recent job posts.

The one and only opportunity that the interviewees named to expand or intensify the interaction within the stakeholder network for recruitment is on the common usage of platforms. As mentioned before, the Swiss organisation maintains a platform with a stakeholder. This platform has a career section, which somehow is not used by the Swiss organisation. So although it would be possible to publish job posts on this website, it is not done.

6.2.3.4 Summary

The goal of this chapter was to find an answer to the third research sub-question: *What risks, benefits and opportunities are connected to an organisation's recruitment when adopting an internal stakeholder perspective?*

The German organisation is already working at a high level regarding its recruitment activities. Nevertheless, the analysis of the interview data has shown that the interviewees indeed see opportunities that are connected to a change of view towards the stakeholder perspective. This change of perspective opens up multiple potentials which are often connected to a better overview on the run activities and the reflection which offers a chance to think about alternative recruitment channels or engagement with current and additional stakeholders. The interviewees even presented several recommendations and development potentials in different areas. Additionally, it was also asserted that the interviewees do not only see opportunities when adopting the stakeholder perspective in recruitment, they also demonstrated their willingness to get more involved in the recruitment activities and in the realisation of their ideas for their organisation.

The Swiss organisation on the other side operates already at a very high level regarding the interaction with its stakeholder network. The employees within the organisation are well aware of the various opportunities that open up when adopting the stakeholder perspective. Until now, those stakeholder networks were professionally managed for the good of the organisation. However, seeing opportunities opening up through the proactive management of the network in regards to recruitment seems to play a minor role. Due to the comfortable recruitment situation of the organisation, it sees no need to get involved in further activities and therefore also in strengthening the interaction with stakeholders which would be interesting for recruitment purposes.

6.2.4 Conclusion

The analysis of the German and the Swiss organisation has proven the choice of methodology for this study. This allowed a deep insight into the recruitment activities of the organisations, and the involvement of its employees and stakeholders. The qualitative data collected allowed the author to understand the complex stakeholder networks in which the two organisations are embedded in and at the same time investigated this stakeholder perspective.

The findings of the research show that the German organisation has already adopted some kind of stakeholder perspective. Of course it is not a one by one realisation of the theory, but parts are visible. In comparison to that, despite the small size of the Swiss organisation, its stakeholder network for business as well as for recruitment is huge.

The collected data helped to understand the complexity of the two networks for the recruitment situation of the German and the Swiss organisation and also allowed the drawing of individual stakeholder maps for recruitment for each organisation.

A perceived influence of the internal stakeholder perspective on the recruitment and the employer branding of both organisations was found. With the Swiss organisation the analysis even has shown that the organisation is fully aware of the benefits that it gains by adopting the stakeholder perspective. This is close to the core values and mission of the Swiss organisation. Nevertheless, until today this was mainly applied to the business situation and not to recruitment activities.

It was proven that there is a perceived influence of the internal stakeholder perspective on the recruitment and the employer branding of both organisations. This stakeholder perspective in recruitment also leads to the perception of a variety of connected benefits as well as risks. On top of that, the analysis has shown that adopting the stakeholder view also opens up different opportunities to the relevant people and organisation.

6.3 Addressing the conceptual framework

After having addressed and answered the research questions, those findings need also to be linked back to the literature synthesis. Therefore the highlighted issues from the literature synthesis in chapter 2.7.3 are now here brought together with the findings from the study. Each of the seven issues (please see figure 9 below) is addressed individually and insights from both cases are provided.

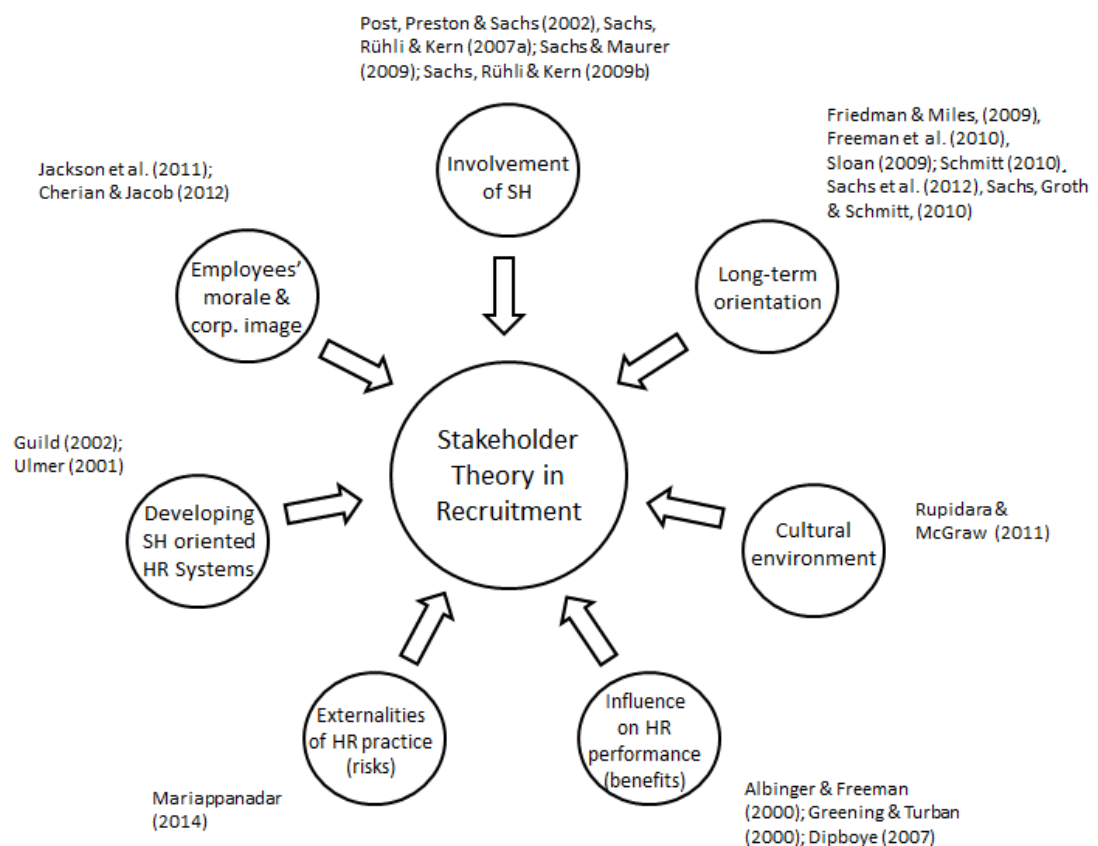


Figure 9: Conceptual Framework - Highlighted Issues for Stakeholder Theory in Recruitment

6.3.1 Involvement of stakeholders

The involvement of stakeholders is something which is valued by both of the two analysed organisations. Besides the importance of the various internal stakeholders

which are crucial for the recruitment process, the external stakeholders are paid a lot of attention to. The German organisation for example maintains relations and co-operations to a large set of external institutions or organisations explicitly targeted on supporting the recruitment and employer branding efforts. Nevertheless, those relationships to external stakeholders are not entirely focused on recruitment. Further co-operations, for example with university institutions for collaborative research are also maintained, and have positive side effects on the recruitment activities of the organisation. Stakeholders which are not explicitly considered to be important for recruitment are also not seen as such. This is interesting as it offers various opportunities to further engage with them, also having the idea of recruitment in mind.³⁰

The Swiss organisation on the other side operates already at a very high level regarding the interaction and involvement with its stakeholder network. All of the interviewed employees deal with the external stakeholder network on a daily basis and are fully aware of the multiple opportunities which are opened up when they are involved in value creation. During the time of the data collection, those external stakeholders however, have only been seen as business partners which need to be managed professionally, but without considering them proactively for recruitment activities.³¹

It can be assumed that the two organisations are fully aware of the importance to involve internal, but especially external stakeholders. In the German organisation the involvement of external stakeholders for recruitment activities is a core part of their recruitment efforts while the Swiss organisation does not see the need to do that given their comfortable recruitment situation.

6.3.2 Long-term orientation

As described in chapter 6.1.1.1, the core business of the Swiss organisation is based on the co-operation with a large set of external stakeholders. Managing them well and

³⁰ Please see chapter 6.1.2.1 for more details.

³¹ Please see chapter 6.1.2.2 for more details.

establishing long-lasting relationships is part of the mission of the organisation. This is why the long-term orientation can clearly be seen here.

The German organisation on the other hand is operating in a more dynamic environment. For their core business they also rely on long-term relations to their customers. This is also due to the relations to their other external stakeholders which are important for recruitment activities. Long-lasting relationships have been implemented for example with universities even to such an extent that they are involved in building up and funding several study programs which are targeted to educate potential future candidates for the organisation. Also the characteristics of the organisation - being family-owned and not relying on the public presentation of results every quarter - allows the establishment of long-term relations with their external stakeholders for recruitment.

6.3.3 Cultural environment

One of the issues that has already been described and explained in some detail in the analysis sections for the German and the Swiss organisation is the corporate culture. During the interview phase and later on during the analysis of the interview material, it became clear that the corporate culture has a special relevance for both cases. There is no doubt that a positive corporate culture may also have a positive impact on several steps of the recruitment process as well as a supporting function for the employer branding of an organisation. This study is not aiming to look at the advantages of a positive corporate culture for communication. Although corporate communications has some interference when it comes to employer branding and communicating the image of a good employer, this study is focusing on the stakeholder perspective of such issues. So, the question is how a beneficial corporate culture may impact or support the success of actively managing a stakeholder network for recruitment. This little but important change of perspective is interesting.

This study has identified some characteristics of the two organisations' corporate culture. Both cultures are different, but still have some key characteristics in common which contribute positively to their recruitment success. Those characteristics are: awareness, appreciation, openness, trustfulness, co-operation and friendliness. Most of

those terms speak for themselves and need no further definition on top of the descriptions provided in the two chapters on corporate culture of the two organisations.³² The term openness however needs some further explanation, as it should be understood in all its depth. Here openness is meant to be shown not only on a very general level, but especially in the recruitment processes. In this case, openness needs therefore not only to be maintained towards the candidates and internal stakeholders, but also towards the entire stakeholder network and the management of the established co-operations. As literature has already shown, this openness is indeed crucial for adopting a stakeholder perspective (Sachs et al., 2010). It therefore bears enormous potential and forms the basis for a successful development of an organisation towards this direction, as has been shown by a study by Sachs et al. (2008b) in the Swiss pharmaceutical industry. This openness is not only an empty phrase. It is something that should not be underestimated – in value and in difficulty of implementation. Openness needs to become part of the corporate culture and should therefore in a first step become part of the mission of an organisation. However, putting it into the mission does not yet mean that it also becomes part of the mindset of the employees. Openness cannot be dictated top-down, which also means that implementing this takes time and discussion. As here we talk about openness also towards the whole external stakeholder network, it becomes clear that its establishment is not easy to achieve. This is especially true for organisations that are already facing a challenging labour market situation and are used to this competition for human resources as they may have difficulties with this change. Nevertheless, this study has shown that although for example the German organisation is competing strongly with many others for people on the labour market, alternatives are possible. As described, it is part of a conglomerate of IT companies that support a university with the education of people in the field of IT consulting. Here it shows a great degree of openness, although direct competitors are involved as well. The recruitment success which arises from this co-operation with the university (and indirectly with those competitors as well) is based on the required openness which has been shown for this specific form of co-operation in the stakeholder network. This demonstrates the value of that key characteristic of a successful stakeholder oriented organisation. That is also why some academics call the

³² See Chapter 6.2.2.3.

stakeholder approach the untapped potential for organisations (Sachs et al., 2009b), as it is the basis for further activities and co-operations (see Sachs et al., 2008b).

What does it mean to suggest a corporate culture that involves the named characteristics including the more in-depth described openness? Basically, it has implications for practice. Assuming that a corporate culture may tend to be more adequate for a successful adoption of the stakeholder view, which considers the named key characteristics, may offer several opportunities. The meaning for big organisations could be more risky. An authentic corporate culture tends to be much harder to maintain in a big organisation than in a small one. This creates the situation that bigger organisations may struggle more to maintain such a culture. This may also result in a smaller success in managing their stakeholder network proactively with the stakeholder perspective as they may hence fall short on those key characteristics. On the other hand, this would give a potential for small and medium sized organisation – taking for example the key characteristic of appreciation. Appreciation towards candidates also has multiple facets. It involves mainly the treatment of potential candidates. Here, as the study has shown, appreciation can for example be achieved when the organisation is successful in creating a situation in which the candidate and the organisation meet ‘on eye level’. As in smaller organisations, if the amount of people who face candidates during interviews is rather limited, this can much better be ensured. Another example from both cases was that candidates during the last interview always get to know somebody from the top management level. This was perceived with enormous appreciation by all interviewees. This can be much easier arranged among smaller organisations due to shorter and less complex processes. Generally in the war for talent, SMEs face disadvantages in comparison with bigger organisations. This is mainly due to the higher awareness that bigger organisations enjoy. On top of that, also the reputation of bigger organisations (‘big names’) and of course the available resources for recruitment play a role. Nevertheless, when looking at those highlighted key characteristics that positively impact the recruitment success, the SMEs may be better off. They are advised to take this chance, make use of their situation and therefore have the opportunity to balance out the advantages the bigger organisations currently have in the labour market.

However, it needs to be stated that due to the findings of this study, such a culture with the named key characteristics does not only need to be established, and authentic. It also

needs to be communicated. There is no added value in having a favourable corporate culture and not communicating it to the stakeholder network. This does not necessarily need to be done proactively. Sometimes this just comes along. An example from the German organisation demonstrates this. Its customers appreciate the working culture among the German organisation's consultants which have already led to recommendations and therefore recruitment success.³³ Nevertheless, it cannot always be assumed that the corporate culture of an organisation is communicated automatically to the stakeholder network. It needs to be communicated positively to the primary stakeholders in the network, as they are often a major influencer in how the organisation is seen as an employer within the network. For this, a proper strategy is needed which has to consider the targeting of individual stakeholders – as we have seen in the two cases here, e.g. customers for the German organisation or business partners for the Swiss organisation.

The research here has also shown that proper stakeholders to consider within such a strategy are: different social media, auditing employer award organisations, several different platforms and not forgetting the organisation's own employees acting as ambassadors. It needs to be added that communication is one thing, but being an active and reliable stakeholder in the network itself is even more important. If this is not the case, a well-developed communication strategy may face fundamental challenges, which brings us back to the issue of authenticity.

6.3.4 Influence on HR performance (benefits)

This study also wanted to investigate into the perceived influence of the stakeholder view on the success of the organisation or the human resource activities.

In both cases, clear evidence was found that the adoption of the stakeholder view and the proactive management of stakeholder relations in recruitment bear various benefits which are seen by the interviewees. For further details on this issue, please see the results on the research sub-question three, which are provided in chapter 6.2.3.1.

³³ See Chapter 6.2.2.3 for more details.

6.3.5 Externalities of HR practices (risks)

Just alike the perceived positive influence or benefits when the stakeholder view is adopted by an organisation for recruitment, this was also analysed for negative externalities of recruitment activities in both organisations.

Interviewees of both organisations only see a short list of negative externalities (or risks) connected to the stakeholder view and their organisation proactively managing its stakeholder network in recruitment. Those risks do nevertheless play a significant role and should be paid attention to. More details about those risks and how they are perceived and could potentially be dealt with are provided in chapter 6.2.3.2 where the answer on the third research sub-questions is presented.

6.3.6 Developing SH oriented HR system

This issue has some overlaps with the first issue – involvement of stakeholders. However, here not the individual relations and the involvement of the stakeholders are addressed, but the whole HR system of organisations. As described before, the German organisation is not yet following a stakeholder approach to the extent that the relations to the stakeholders are at the heart of their organisation or their HR system.

This looks somewhat different with the Swiss organisation. An essential part of its mission is to work closely with several stakeholders, ranging from NGOs, cantonal and federal organisations to private businesses. It can be said that their mission or the core task of the organisation is to work closely with its stakeholders - making awareness and co-operation an essential part of the work. This is however not the case with the HR system of the Swiss organisation. So nevertheless the study shows some hints that a more stakeholder oriented HR system may provide a large set of benefits (see chapter 6.2.3.1), no direct information on this issue can be withdrawn from the findings of this study.

6.3.7 Employees' morale & corporate image

The literature on Green HR and sustainable HRM which is referred to here, suggests, that more stakeholder-oriented practices in HR may positively impact the employees' morale and lead to a better image of the organisation (Cherian & Jacob, 2012).

In the two analysed cases it was found that the employees who are involved in the co-operation with external stakeholders for recruitment purpose are impacted by those tasks in different ways. On the one hand, most of them see the positive impact of those activities for the recruitment success of the organisation, but they also showed a certain pride in working for the organisations and also spread the word about those attractive work places to potential candidates, be it targeted or non-targeted. A direct impact of the stakeholder orientation on the morale of the employees however was not discovered in the two analysed cases. However, this looks different with the corporate image. In the German case, the multiple engagements with stakeholders are seen by the interviewees as a great influence of the image as an employer. Also the formerly named corporate culture plays a significant role for the image of the organisation as an employer.

The employees of the Swiss organisation are fully aware of the positive impact of the stakeholder view on the image of the organisation as an employer. Several interviewees named their primary stakeholders as the core influencers of their image which can proactively be faced with their stakeholder approach.

6.3.8 Overview on the issues and statements from the two cases

This short sub-chapter here intends to bring the findings presented on the previous pages together. The following two tables 25 and 26 are inspired by the presentation of qualitative data by Clarke & Higgs (2014). They provide an overview on the seven issues and findings from each of the two analysed organisations. Those findings are also supported by quotations from several interviewees of both organisations to bring the reader close to the collected data material.

Issue	German organisation	Swiss organisation
Involvement of Stakeholders	<p>High proactive involvement of external stakeholders in the recruitment activities. Sometimes, proactive involvement with sensitive stakeholder cannot be done, but may still lead to results:</p> <p><i>"Now we have the son of one of our customers here. This customer recommended to his son once to do an internship with us and now he has joined us as a dual student studying at university I."</i> (18:19)</p>	<p>High and professional level of involving their stakeholders, but only for the core business, not for recruitment purpose.</p> <p><i>"It is right that we have very many contacts every day and in the end we could profit from those also for recruitment."</i> (6:22)</p>
Long-term orientation	<p>The organisation is oriented on long-term co-operations with their external stakeholders for recruitment purpose. Considerable resources are invested in those relationships.</p>	<p>Long-term orientation in managing their stakeholders is part of the mission of the organisation and therefore an essential part of their business.</p>
Cultural environment	<p>Plays a strong role for the recruitment situation of the organisation and differentiates them from competitors in the industry.</p> <p><i>"I could imagine that for some people there may even be a culture shock. If you come from our competitor D, then you are used to a totally different culture. I sometimes see that when we recruit somebody there and they think: 'What kind of company is that? They are all so soft'. That may be a cliché and may even be wrong and of course people interpret it in their own way. (...) I have never experienced political games here."</i> (14:27)</p>	<p>Plays a strong role for the recruitment situation of the organisation and the whole industry.</p> <p><i>"In health management helping other organisations to fill a vacancy is not unusual. This may be different in the private economy, but among NGOs, we are happy to distribute the job posts of others. I do also frequently receive emails with a job post attached to distribute it in my network."</i> (2:18)</p>

Table 25: Issues and findings from the two cases – Part 1

Influence on HR performance (benefits)	<p>A long list of various benefits is seen by the interviewees of the organisation which can positively impact the performance of the HR and the whole organisation.</p> <p><i>"Then you will learn which recruiting channels you can intensify. Also you may see some and find out that it is nonsense to invest time and money further in this stakeholder relation as others are much more important."</i> (18:22)</p> <p><i>"We may get more applications and more employees afterwards. So it will mainly impact the HR department."</i> (17:29)</p>	<p>Various benefits are seen by the interviewees as a stakeholder orientation is already in place and benefits are enjoyed. Further potential benefits are also seen if stakeholders may be more involved in regards of recruitment activities.</p> <p><i>"Using the established contacts to our partners also for recruitment purposes could indeed have a positive influence. I would need to meet them with it in mind, but this was totally not on my radar until now."</i> (3:14)</p>
Externalities of HR practices (risks)	Several potential negative externalities or risks are seen by the interviewees.	Also in the Swiss organisation the interviewees see several potential risks for the HR practice when the stakeholder view is adopted for recruitment.
Development of stakeholder oriented HR system	Potential benefits of a stakeholder-oriented HR system are seen, but the case provides no direct evidence here.	In the Swiss organisation, potential benefits of a stakeholder-oriented HR system are seen, but also this case provides no direct evidence.
Employee's morale and corporate image	<p>Direct influence of the stakeholder view on the employees and the corporate image as an employer is seen by the interviewees.</p> <p><i>"Of course our employees are crucial for our image as an employer. I have recently heard from different directions that employees from other companies similar to ours, (...) say that they totally liked the competencies that our employees have shown and the way they work together and treat each other and the customers."</i> (11:19)</p>	Also in the Swiss organisation, a direct influence of the stakeholder view on the corporate image as an employer is seen by the interviewees.

Table 26: Issues and findings from the two cases – Part 2

6.4 Further Research Findings and Interpretation

In addition to previous chapter, in which detailed findings from the German and the Swiss case have been presented and discussed, this chapter intends to go another step further. It is interesting to look at three additional issues in a more holistic view, see connections and causal chains and interpret and develop them further (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Three such issues are discussed in this chapter.

6.4.1 The role of the benefits

The investigation into both of the cases has shown a much bigger perception of benefits in comparison to risks when talking about the adoption of the stakeholder view for recruitment. Generally it is no surprise that when interviewees become more familiar with the stakeholder approach they start seeing various benefits coming along with it. However, as the interviewees have explicitly been asked to think about this in terms of recruitment during this study, it was something that was not foreseeable. Interestingly, fundamental differences regarding the perception of such benefits between the two cases were not found. However, one organisation is already following a rather developed stakeholder approach (the Swiss organisation), and the other one is not (the German organisation). This leads to the assumption that such benefits are not only seen when just thinking about it, but also when the stakeholder approach has already been experienced.

The question that follows is: Can such perceived benefits be a motivation for organisations to take the stakeholder approach? This is here not only meant in a general way, but explicitly with a focus on recruitment. As the interviews with the Swiss case have shown, a stakeholder approach for the core business does not necessarily lead to the same approach in recruitment. In the case of the Swiss organisation, this may be simply due to the currently good recruitment situation of the organisation. However, this means that the organisation only wants to initiate or follow a stakeholder approach in recruitment if the conditions on the labour market ask for more than basic activities. This was also discussed during a validation interview with the head of HR of the Swiss

organisation. Due to him, the organisation would involve its stakeholder network in its recruitment, if the pressure from the labour market side were higher.

Interestingly the German organisation, which is currently not following a stakeholder approach but suffers high pressure from the labour market, thinks in a similar way. Also, a validation interview with the head of HR of the German organisation took place. It indicated that if an investigation can discover strong benefits of the stakeholder perspective for recruitment success, it would at least initiate a serious discussion within the organisation. The organisation itself has no real experience in managing a stakeholder network proactively with a holistic view. According to the head of HR, this may be the reason why a careful assessment of the stakeholder approach for its recruitment would need to take place first. Nevertheless, positive feedback has been collected from the German organisation on this. The results of the research were presented during the validation interview. During the discussion of those findings, the German head of HR showed a general interest in the stakeholder perspective for its recruitment. This is rather unspecific, but it gives us a hint on the value of the perceived benefits that have been collected during the interviews and presented afterwards. They demonstrate why it is worth it for organisations to follow the stakeholder perspective and therefore initiate a thinking process about the usefulness of the stakeholder approach for their own organisation.

What has also become clear during this analysis and the validation interview is that the collection of regarded information on the stakeholder network for recruitment is an essential basis for any further step towards adopting the stakeholder perspective as an organisation.

6.4.2 Information search

This research has clearly found that information is critical. Organisations that are active in challenging labour markets need information that may potentially enhance their activities and therefore positively affect their recruitment success. This also includes information about the stakeholder network for recruitment.

In many organisations, as with the German case, the full picture of an organisation's activities for recruitment is often only concentrated with the head of HR. Often HR staff only know about parts of the recruitment activities. This is understandable if plenty of activities are run and multiple relations maintained. The result is that there is no full picture of all the activities that are run for recruitment or employer branding and how they play together. Nevertheless, the information is available at those organisations, whether in documents or simply divided among divisions or people. In order to be able to get a full idea of the recruitment situation in the network, that information needs to be collected and consolidated. This is especially interesting as it also bears the potential that there exist relations which the HR department is not aware of. Examples from the two cases are connections to universities where an employee has formerly been studying or associations in which employees may already have a connection to, but are not made use of for recruitment or employer branding purposes.

This generates the need for an adequate method to collect that information. So, the collection of this information is a rather crucial step. If it is possible to bring all the essential information together, a stakeholder map may be created which could then visualise all activities and relations – as was done for the two analysed organisations in this study. So the actual collection of the information is only a first step. What should follow then is the development of such a map and the integration of all the collected information.

Application

Based on the methodology and the findings of this project, it could be suggested that parts of the methodology could also be beneficial when creating a consulting service. The goal of such a consulting service could indeed be the creation of stakeholder maps for recruitment and how it has been shown in the two chapters where the findings from the German and the Swiss cases were presented.³⁴ The interviews as well as the follow-up discussions with the two respective heads of HR have shown that such a map could be beneficial in different dimensions for the planning of recruitment processes. The question may then also be how much information can possibly be visualised in such a map. Feedback from the validation interviews also suggested that such a map could

³⁴ See Chapter 6.2.1.

contain options to visualise the recruitment channels of specific categories of employees, numbers of successful recruits per stakeholder relation, and also providing numbers on how much has already been invested in a relationship. This would allow the HR department, as well as other interested employees and decision makers, to keep track of the management of their stakeholder network. From this information, strong development potential as well as multiple options for further research can be seen.³⁵

Creating a more practical map or tool to collect information on which such a stakeholder map for recruitment can be built, could eventually become an attractive issue for consulting. Such a consulting service may then include several interviews with the relevant HR department, workshops with different employees also following a maximum variety approach, the building up of such a stakeholder map and then the extension of it through several workshops. The result could then be a map similar to the ones developed within this study. This map may enable the decision makers of an organisation to better see and understand the relations the organisation has and maintains within the network. It may also show how successful or intense those relations are, where the network could be extended and how resources could be allocated in order to make more out of the existing relations.

6.4.3 Industry focus

Another issue that has been found during the analysis in this study is the value of the industry focus. The previous three chapters have shown findings that are still closer to the collected data material. This one goes another step further. It brings some issues from the two organisations together, develops them further and raises an issue that has only recently started to get more attention in research.

First, the term ‘industry focus’ needs to be briefly introduced. This term was made up by the author trying to mirror the German term ‘*Branchenorientierung*’ which could also be translated as ‘orientation on the industry or sector’. However, this does not fully match the original meaning. Here industry focus is understood as the view regarding

³⁵ Please see Chapter 7.3 for further research suggestions.

one issue for an entire industry of a country. Hence in this case and in connection with the two case studies, it is the issues of recruitment for the Swiss health sector for NGOs and the German IT or IT consulting sector.

It needs to be argued why it may be beneficial to look at a whole sector in comparison to individual organisations. The reason for this is rather simple. In comparison to the stakeholder network of an organisation, the full stakeholder network of a whole sector or industry may allow a better understanding of important causal chains in recruitment and what drivers are active. Basically, the stakeholder network of an industry is nothing but another stakeholder network like the one for a single organisation which is much larger, but also which stops at the border of the industry. However, this is not the case with individual organisational networks. Such industries do create to a certain extent the environment in which organisations are active and set rules. In the Swiss case, it was shown that the Swiss health sector for NGOs is indirectly influencing the recruitment of the organisation to a high extent. The culture in this industry does not appreciate or accept aggressive recruitment activities from any organisation. As interviewees have said, it would theoretically be possible to recruit even more successfully in the sector, but due to this culture, borders are set. Also with the German case, certain rules were observed. Here the industry is used to aggressive recruitment. The usage of head hunter services to recruit sometimes entire departments from competitors is possible. Those two cases therefore show how the industry may set the borders for recruitment activities.

This chapter assumes that the industry focus provides several opportunities for organisations. Unlike in the German case, in the Swiss case it was observed that the industry has a much more co-operative spirit. Not only are job ads floating more or less freely within the industry as it is supported by most of the stakeholders, but common initiatives are also set up. One interviewee explained that several organisations from the industry work together to create a study programme with a university to educate experts for corporate health management. Something similar is observed among the German case. Here several companies within the IT consulting sector fund a master programme in IT consulting from which then thereafter all companies can source new employees.

Generally there are many different ways in which a whole industry can work together for a certain issue. The idea is that if the stakeholders in one industry step back from the

competitive approach to a more co-operative one, they can have a much more positive impact not only for the industry as a whole, but also for themselves. Regarding recruitment, such examples could include the co-operation to create and maintain education and further training programmes or campaigns to promote this industry as an attractive field for employment. Recent publications show practical examples of such industry focuses from Austria, Germany and Switzerland for promoting employment and education (Spaar & Sitte, 2014) and to improve retention (Amstutz, Konrad, Minnig & Spaar, 2013).

The question to be raised may of course be what specific chances such an industry focus may offer. As this is in total contradiction to most of the industries in Europe where competition is still the main driver and co-operation is mostly only enforced by associations, a radical change of thinking would be needed. As well as not being easy for organisations to change their current view towards a stakeholder view, it is also no easy task convincing organisations to break down their walls and start co-operating with other organisations in their industry – especially in recruitment. However, there are areas where this is already beginning. A recent research project by Amstutz et al. (2013) that investigated the Swiss health care sector with a focus on retirement homes came to this conclusion. This sector suffers from a lack of skilled workers, mainly nurses. Several organisations in this field have learned that if they work together to create and provide education and further training for their specialists, this may not only lead to a higher retention of those people in their own organisation, but it may also prevent them from leaving the industry and finding an alternative job, which is one of the greater worries. As a result, all organisations within this industry can profit from those efforts although they have been and still are competitors in the labour market (Amstutz et al., 2013).

Certainly several things are needed to overcome the organisational borders. As explained in Chapter 6.3.3, it mainly needs openness and the willingness to raise the good of the industry above the own good. The idea is that if an industry is working together as a network to get the people they need, all in the network who seek employees are better off. If taking into consideration the current labour market situation in Switzerland and Germany and the upcoming effects of the demographic change on the labour markets, such approaches to more co-operation and openness within an industry are worth looking at (Spaar & Sitte, 2014; Jánoszy & Abicht, 2013).

So, the stakeholder perspective may contribute to overcome organisational borders and therefore help organisations to work together to attract more people to join the industry and to also create an environment and opportunities which retain people in their jobs and in their industry.

6.5 Validation Study

Validating the findings of a study is very important, not only for the scientific value, but in this case to check or prove if the results can on the one hand be understood by people from practice, and on the other hand to see if there can be a practical value of the findings. With both heads of HR it was agreed to discuss the results of the study after the analysis at an early stage. Both have personally been interested in the study and its potential results and made a detailed feedback or discussion of the findings a crucial part of the agreement for participating in the study. This is why the author had two intensive meetings, one with each head of HR to present and discuss the general findings of the research as well as some individual findings from the organisations. Those meetings took place right after the analysis of the interviews was finished. It allowed the valuable opportunity to discuss in depth the findings that enriched the author's understanding of the two organisations and how they could potentially make use of the gained results. It also allowed the validation of the findings personally with the two interviewees who are closest to the topic and who are the main drivers in both organisations for innovation in HRM. However, a validation through in-depth conversation was decided not to be enough. This is why a full validation study was still run afterwards.

Running a study to validate the findings of the main study was already planned at the very beginning. This is also why the interview guide – in all versions – includes a note on it. Essentially, this means that at the end of all conducted interviews, the interviewees have been informed that the findings will need to be validated after the analysis through a short online survey. This was also the time when the interviewees were asked if they would be willing to participate in this validation study. All of the interviewees agreed to participate.

When the interviews of the German and the Swiss organisation were analysed, the validation study was set up. The main cornerstones were that the study needed to be short for the participants to answer and as simple as possible. Therefore, it was decided to use Questback to set up an online survey. The author was already familiar with the tool and the handling of it. Sending out the link to the survey along with the invitation to participate was quite efficient.

As all interviewees have agreed to participate, both heads of HR sent out an email announcing that they are invited to participate one week before the start of the survey. This proceeding was intended to raise awareness on the survey itself and therefore also increase participation. The study was run in August and September, which is also holiday time in Germany as well as in Switzerland. Therefore it was decided to not only run the survey for one or two, but for three weeks, which should allow participants who are on vacation at the beginning of the survey to participate. The participation rate can be called satisfactory. Out of 18 invited former interviewees, 12 participated in the validation study. However, it needs to be mentioned that the distribution was rather unequal. Basically two individual surveys were run, one for each organisation. The only difference between the two surveys was the individual stakeholder map for recruitment for each organisation. While from the Swiss organisation only three out of nine interviewees answered the survey, all of the interviewees from the German organisation answered the survey.

As mentioned at the beginning, the validation study was intended to be as simple as possible, which was not only an intention from the author, but also a request from the interviewees and the heads of HR. In Appendix I the detailed validation study is documented with screen-shots of all pages. Basically, the participants were confronted with the simplified answers to the research questions and asked for confirmation or denial. The content of the validation study was as follows:

1. Introduction: Here the participants are welcomed and introduced to the validation study and it was announced that filling out the survey may only take as little as 5 minutes.

2. Here the following page was introduced as the stakeholder map for recruitment of the organisation.
3. On page three the stakeholder map of the organisation was shown and shortly explained. This is the only page that looked different to the two organisations where of course the individual stakeholder map was shown.
4. Question 1: Here the following statement was shown: The stakeholder map opens up new perspectives. This can generally have an influence on the recruitment and employer branding of the German/Swiss organisation. The participants were asked to rate this statement with: I agree – I rather agree – I rather disagree – or I disagree.
5. Question 2: Here the following statement was shown: Taking the stakeholder perspective by using such a map and a proactive usage of it may provide different benefits for recruitment. Thereafter some small examples from the interviews were provided and the participants were asked to rate this statement like the previous one.
6. Question 3: Here the following statement was shown: Taking the stakeholder perspective by using such a map and a proactive usage of it may provide different risks. Here also some examples from the interviews were provided. The rating was set up as with the previous two questions.
7. Question 4: Here the following statement was shown: A stakeholder map for recruitment may open up new opportunities and create ideas as to how we eventually could improve our recruitment in the future. The participants were asked to rate this statement like the previous once.
8. This was the last page where a picture of the author was shown and the participants were thanked for their efforts. Also the author's email address was shown to allow a contact in case the participants have any questions regarding the study.

The consolidated results of the two surveys can be seen in the following table.

	The stakeholder map opens up new perspectives. This can generally have an influence on the recruitment and employer branding of the German/Swiss organisation.	Taking over the stakeholder perspective by using such a map and a proactive usage of it may provide different benefits for recruitment.	Taking over the stakeholder perspective by using such a map and a proactive usage of it may provide different risks.	A stakeholder map for recruitment may open up new opportunities and create ideas how we eventually could improve our recruitment in the future.
I agree	4	3	3	4
I rather agree	8	9	3	7
I rather disagree	-	-	6	1
I disagree	-	-	-	-

Table 27: Results validation study

The table provides a good overview of the results of the validation study. Statements were formulated in such a way that if the participants agreed, they validated the findings from the main study. For questions one and two, the participants clearly validated the findings with not a single exception. The same with only one exception is also true for to the fourth question. Only question three on the potential risks perceived sticks out. Here half of the participants rather disagreed. This is balanced with three participants who agreed and three who rather agreed. This finding of the validation study is also a proof of the findings from the main study. As is described in Chapter 6.2.3, there were indeed people who did not see any risks connected to the adoption of the stakeholder perspective. It was stated that several risks were seen by the interviewees, but significantly fewer than benefits. This is fully mirrored in the findings from the validation study.

It can be stated that the validation study fully supports the findings from the main study.

7 CONTRIBUTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter provides more information on the actual contribution of this study for literature and practice. Furthermore the strengths and limitations of this study are presented alongside with a reflection of the research process.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

Stakeholder theory has been discussed in the literature since the 1980s and various applications in business have been found and investigated. However, applying and studying the stakeholder approach with the field of HRM has not been emphasised. Seeing stakeholder management through the eyes of recruitment is a fully new field in literature. This was the area of investigation for this study.

The following sections summarise the contribution to the literature that was gained through this study.

7.1.2 Tested methodology

The chosen methodology for this study was on the one hand inspired by the formerly conducted research of several authors in that field and also adapted to the specific conditions of this study. A pilot test ensured the usefulness of the interview guide that was developed further during the research process. After the main study was run, the results were validated through interviews and an online survey. This shows that the chosen methodology was carefully tested and run and therefore ensured a high quality of the gained results which allowed an answer to the research questions to be found and also allowed further analysis and interpretation of the data.

The methodology has proven its usefulness to collect the needed data, do a proper analysis and therefore come up with valuable results. In Chapter 6.4.2, especially the data collection process of this study is further reflected on. This transparent and rigorous proceeding allows the potential for this methodology to be used in similar studies in the same field and therefore allows this study to be replicated to a certain extent by other researchers.

7.1.2 Influence of stakeholder view on recruitment

For the presentation of the theoretical contribution, a link can be drawn again to the conceptual framework created from the literature synthesis of this study (see Chapter 2.7.3). Several of those issues are addressed here and in the following sub-chapter.

The study has shown that in the German as well as in the Swiss organisation there is a perceived influence on the recruitment of the organisations when the stakeholder perspective is adopted. Both organisations were found to be in a rather different state regarding stakeholder orientation. Nevertheless, in both organisations strong evidence for this was found. It can be concluded that organisations that are not yet following a stakeholder approach as well as organisations that partly do, see an influence of the internal stakeholder view on their recruitment activities and its success. Furthermore, a direct or indirect influence on the employer branding of the organisations is perceived.

Dipboye (2007) called for a more scientific approach for HRM research. He explicitly stated that the stakeholder perspective could potentially help to improve and strengthen the science status of HRM research. Also Dipboye (2007) as well as Greenwood and Simmons (2004) suggest that engaging with stakeholders may positively influence certain disciplines in HRM. This study provides empirical data which supports those suggestions. The two cases provide a great deal of insights on how the stakeholder view may positively influence the performance of recruitment (see issue *Influence on HR performance*, Chapter 6.3.4) and may therefore encourage further discussions in that field.

This multi-case study is the first empirical work which brings together the stakeholder view with recruitment and therefore may help to open up a new field in HRM and stakeholder research. Ferrary (2009) mapped the external stakeholders which are relevant for organisation's HR departments. This study goes one step further, by providing a deep insight into stakeholder networks for one HRM function – recruitment. Therefore it is one step further in the direction of developing stakeholder oriented HR systems as it was suggested by Guild (2001) and Ulmer (2001).

7.1.3 Risks, benefits and opportunities of the stakeholder perspective

Drawn from the literature synthesis, it was suggested that the *influence on HR performance* (benefits) (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Greening & Turban, 2000) as well as the *externalities of HR practice* (risks) (Mariappanadar, 2014) play an important role when the stakeholder view is adopted for recruitment. The study shows that the analysed organisations and their employees see concrete benefits connected to the adoption of the stakeholder perspective for recruitment. They see this regardless of the extent to which the organisation is already considering its stakeholder network for recruitment purpose. The change of perspective opens up multiple potentials that are often connected to a better overview on the activities that were run. It also initialises reflection, which offers a chance to think about alternative recruitment channels or engagement with current and additional stakeholders. Further explanations on those benefits are presented in Chapter 6.4.1.

Besides those benefits, the organisations and their employees also see risks connected. Those risks however are much less regarded and play a minor role compared to the perceived benefits. On top of that, opportunities are also seen. This is especially interesting as they may or may not be concrete. Generally, it was found out that adopting the stakeholder perspective leads to new insights and may also inspire new ideas which can be of various natures to improve the organisation's success in recruitment and its employer branding efforts.

7.2 Contribution for practitioners

This sub-chapter intends to also show the potential practical implications which this study may allow. The two named practical contributions were found during the research and also were discussed with several of the people involved in this study.

7.2.1 Focus on stakeholder network

Besides the methodology and the answers to the research question, the study has also shown that adopting the stakeholder perspective for recruitment is not too abstract. The

people involved in this study clearly see the benefits connected, which opens them up to generally consider new perspectives. This may in a first step initialise further internal discussions and potentially a chance for the development of an organisation towards stakeholder orientation.

Prejudices connected to an open stakeholder culture were observed to be reduced within such organisations that went through the study and were confronted closely with the topic. The people involved have become sensitised. It has shown them alternatives to the pure war for talent and as such it offers the opportunity to find an own way as an organisation under consideration of its own stakeholder network to create a situation – through co-operation – which is very beneficial for the organisation’s own recruitment needs, and also good for the stakeholder network or even the industry as a whole.³⁶

7.2.2 Stakeholder mapping for recruitment

The study resulted in the creation of several stakeholder maps for recruitment for the two individual cases, from which two are shown in Chapter 6.2.1. Until the time of writing, such specific visualisations of stakeholder maps have not been published in the relevant literature. These stakeholder maps do not only show the complex network of multiple stakeholders, they also show the linkages between them and therefore allow a holistic view on the whole recruitment situation.

The creation of several versions of the stakeholder map, e.g. only showing the primary stakeholders or highlighting the recently used recruitment channels, provides multiple values to the HR departments. During the validation interviews, the two heads of HR appraised the stakeholder maps openly. Such rich overviews containing plenty of qualitative information collected during the document and interview phase were considered to add significant value not only to the HR departments, but also to the employees.³⁷

³⁶ Please see Chapter 6.3.3 for more details.

³⁷ Please see Chapter 6.5 for the full results of the validation study.

7.3 Recommendations for further research

This study did not only find answers to the stated research questions and allowed further interpretations of the collected rich data material, it also provided hints on potential further research in this area. The most remarkable recommendations for further research are described in this chapter.

7.3.1 Development of stakeholder visualisations for recruitment

The study has shown the opportunities connected with visualisations of stakeholder networks for recruitment purposes. The visualisations presented in this study are not of a high level due to the limited programming skills of the author and the limited pre-existing work in that area. However, this can and should be seen as a starting point. These visualisations can be developed further. For this, not only the consideration and testing of alternative visualisation tools is necessary. More empirical research could also be done in this field to enlarge and strengthen the database.

Furthermore, if the creation of such a map should one day become some kind of consulting service, a more efficient method for collecting the necessary data is required and should be developed. Running plenty of in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews is certainly not the most efficient way to collect this data, if it is not used for scientific purposes. An alternative could possibly be a study with structured interviews or even qualitative questionnaires. Investigating in those opportunities seems to be highly relevant to practice.

7.3.2 NGOs and their alternative approach to recruitment

This study allowed an insight into the Swiss health sector, especially NGOs. What the author did not expect was to find an environment – or a stakeholder network – which does not get itself into the competition for labour. Those organisations are more oriented on the mission of their organisation and if the mission allows or even supports a free flow of staff between organisations in the industry, it does not cause a problem. This is for example shown in the openness to distribute job ads internally and

externally, although they might come from an organisation that is competing with the focal organisation on the labour market.

This very open and stakeholder-oriented mindset is not to be found often in the business world where competition is the main driver. However, although people may say that for-profit and not-for-profit organisations may be fundamentally different, this does not mean that they cannot learn from each other. It would be interesting to learn more about the human resources functions from non-profit organisations. This is especially so for recruitment, retention and also industry careers.

7.3.3 The impact of the corporate culture on recruitment success

As already explained in Chapter 6.3.3, this study gains the impression that the corporate culture of an organisation may have a large impact on the recruitment success of an organisation as can be observed in the two cases. This, however, is not yet very strong evidence and is far away from being generalisable.

Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct more research in this area. Further research could be done for example by investigating more deeply into candidates' experiences during the recruitment process with organisations. This may then be matched with the perceptions from the people responsible for recruitment and analysed towards the culture of the organisation and the degree of success of communicating it to the candidate prior and during the recruitment process.

7.3.4 Industry focus and industry careers

A fourth recommendation for further research shall be mentioned here. Chapter 6.4.3 has shown that it may be beneficial for organisations to pull down the borders and open up for co-operations between the players of one stakeholder network, or in this case, in one industry. The approach is not fully new, but has often been ignored simply as there was no necessity to team up with other stakeholders or start common campaigns and projects to support the recruitment in a specific industry. However, as the times and the conditions on the labour market (at least in Germany and Switzerland) are changing,

such alternative approaches seem to be a solution for entire industries to attract people to work in this industry and to also retain the current staff.

Retention is especially interesting here, because in many industries this does not only affect staying in an organisation, but also prevents people changing their job and leaving the industry (e.g. Amstutz et al., 2013). Investigating what is needed for organisations to start such openness towards the other stakeholders in the industry could show ways for organisations and industries to work more strongly together in the future and face challenges like the demographic change (see also Spaar & Sitte, 2014).

7.4 Strengths and limitations of study

This chapter intends to complete this study with a reflection on the research process. Furthermore, the explicit strengths of the study as well as its limitations are demonstrated.

7.4.1 Reflection on the research process

The author has been involved in several research projects before, which was a great advantage in order to plan the whole research process, especially the data collection. However, this does not mean that the research process went as planned. As usual, several delays and unexpected circumstances lead to changes in the work plan. Nevertheless, the organisation of the entire research process with a Gantt-chart and the considerations of alternative tasks while other work packages are on hold, have proven to be of great value.

The greatest challenges during the research process showed up when the co-operation with the two organisations for the data collection started. First of all, getting the written agreements for the data access took much longer as estimated as in both organisations the general director needed to sign such an agreement which lead to a delay of almost two months during the mentoring stage for the preparation of the research proposal. The next challenge was to bridge the time between getting the written agreement and the start of the data collection. During this time, when the author was doing all the literature

reviews and the preparation of the data collection as well as the pilot study, the two organisations needed to be managed and kept at it.

During the data collection one big challenge, but also learning, was the need to translate rather complex theories into a language which is understood by the interviewees. That was necessary to make the interviewees familiar with the stakeholder approach and support the data collection.

After the data collection, a rigorous analysis of the data took place, which was also very time-consuming. The challenge here was not the data analysis itself, as the author has done this several times before. The challenge was to put off the two heads of HR who wanted to see the results of the data analysis as soon as possible.

However, despite those challenges, the research process went mostly as planned, which would not have been possible without the support of those two heads of HR, who were not only very interested into the study itself, but also very flexible and understanding. This was a major motivation factor to proceed with the research as planned and helped the author to stay focused.

7.4.2 Strengths of the study

The strengths of this study are multiple. As already mentioned in Chapter 7.1.3, the chosen and run methodology fit very well to the settings and was therefore able to allow a solid data collection. This was also the prerequisite for the planning and execution of the study.

Another strength of this study which should be mentioned is the access to sensitive data material. Doing research in human resource management is always difficult to a certain extent as it often deals with confidential material or issues which are not favoured by people to talk about. Here the good co-operation with the two heads of HR allowed it to build up a relationship based on trust. This was also supported by the guaranteed anonymity of the two organisations and the interviewees as a crucial part of this study. This trustworthy relationship allowed the access to this sensitive material.

Furthermore it allowed the in-depth discussion of all relevant issues, also some which deal with delicate stakeholder relations. The collected data material was not only

sensitive to some extent it was also very rich and allowed a deep and detailed insight into both organisations and the whole social settings. This strong data basis can be called one of the main pillars of this study.

7.4.3 Limitations of the study

Every study is subject to some limitations. Those limitations have to be made transparent to the reader. In the following, several limitations of this study targeting on different areas are explained.

Research sampling

This study focuses on two cases from two different countries, namely Germany and Switzerland. The two organisations also belong to different industries, which was not only intended, but was a prerequisite for the selection. Extending this multi-case study to three or more organisations was not possible due to the scope and the resources available. However, theoretically an extension would have been possible.

Another limitation regarding sampling is the selection of the interviewees. After the sampling criteria for the interviewees were decided on, they were discussed with the heads of HR of the two organisations. Based on those criteria and other factors as availability, they selected the interviewees for this study. It is believed that this did not cause any negative impact, but a potential bias cannot be excluded and should therefore be made transparent.

Research design

The qualitative research design of this study required a high degree of flexibility. This was especially the case as the data collection was mainly depending on the co-operation of the two heads of HR. Flexibility was mainly required in terms of scheduling the data collection process and the analysis. However, the developed tools for the research, mainly the interview guide, have proven its usefulness to investigate in this field. This may allow its use for potential further studies.

Length of the study

At the beginning of the research it was intended to also run some interviews within the external stakeholder networks of the two organisations. This seemed to be feasible at that time. However, after the document analysis and the data collection through internal interviews, it became clear that conducting external interviews was not possible mainly due to ethical reasons. This certainly limits the study, although valuable information on the external perspective was also collected through internal interviews.³⁸

Bias of the author

As is normally the case with qualitative research, a researcher bias may be involved and therefore have an influence on the limitation of a study. The author was involved in stakeholder research prior to the study and personally tends to see the whole concept in a rather positive way. However, the rigorous literature analysis and the in-depth discussion of the weaknesses of the stakeholder approach show the necessary objective position that the author has taken for this study. A bias was also prevented, as the author has not worked with either organisation before, allowing him to stay objective throughout the entire process. Also, the author always emphasised his independency throughout the data collection – especially the interviews. The interviewees never assumed that the author was working for the HR of their organisation, but was an independent researcher. This probably contributed to the rich data which was collected throughout the study.

³⁸ See Chapter 5.2.2 for more details.

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